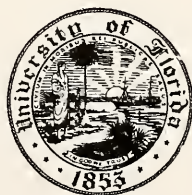




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MAURICE HALBWACHS

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# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL CLASS

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# Contents

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	FOREWORD, BY GEORGES FRIEDMANN	vii
I	INTRODUCTION	I
II	TRADITIONAL CIVILIZATION AND THE PEASANT CLASSES Agricultural Methods and Love of the Soil	21
III	URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION Part 1—The Entrepreneurs and the Bourgeoisie	41
IV	URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION Part 2—The Workers in Large-scale Industry	66
V	URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION Part 3—The Lower Middle, or Intermediate Class	101
VI	CONCLUSION Class, Patriotism, Religion, Science, Art, Politics, Social Morals, as Collective Representations	118
	BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WRITINGS OF MAURICE HALBWACHS	138
	INDEX	141

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## Foreword

ONE of the most terrible features of World War II was undoubtedly the system of inverse selection followed by the Nazi régime. In the past—even in 1914—large-scale wars consisted of vast, indifferent thinnings-out of fighting forces usually engaged in battling for position and wearing the other side down. But in this war those with the finest character, judgment and integrity in the occupied countries singled themselves out by their desire not to give up the struggle, and the enemy were able to decimate an *élite* as they liked; and we now know in what numbers and by what methods they did so. In this way scholars who were not men of action by vocation found themselves connected with the resistance movement through their moral strength, the continuity and uprightness of their thinking and the courageous support they gave to the actual fighters and, first and foremost, to their own close relations. So Maurice Halbwachs, of the Collège de France, arrested by the Gestapo in Paris in July 1944, died in February 1945 at Buchenwald.

His friends did not abandon hope for a long time. They could not bear to think that a family which had already been cruelly and directly struck down three times should again suffer. But Maurice Halbwachs could not withstand the methodical application of hardships. One of his sons, who had been arrested shortly before him, and whom he joined in the camp, was with him as he lay dying. And so to the suffering of so many of her people, the destruction of noble and splendid young lives mourned silently and inconsolably, was added the loss of one of France's great thinkers, a man with a mind and a heart of rare distinction, whose tact and scrupulousness were matched only by his goodness. It is fitting that we should still write of him.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the worst days of the occupation Maurice Halbwachs would invite me to visit him whenever my clandestine journeys sent me to Paris. Doubtless he took other equally great risks without even perceiving the danger.

I would find him in his study on the Boulevard Raspail—a room as simple and unpretentious as the man; one could sense that, as he sat with his courageous wife, he was torn by the sufferings of his own country and of the whole world; and yet there was the customary brave lucidity about his calm face and his slow, serious way of speaking. Not only in private conversation, but in his work and his classes at the Sorbonne, he preserved the spirit of free and honest research into a subject, that of social science, which is full of snares when thus approached under a tyranny. Both in his lectures and in his publications he showed that he was carrying on his research and teaching in the spirit of scientific humanism. A man at once learned and wise, he gave an impression of serene strength that no pressure from without could touch. Throughout the war he served as an admirable example of the way in which human values should nourish and direct action. From this point of view those who were at sea amid the troubles of clandestine existence and struggles found in him an incomparable source of comfort; each time they met him they saw embodied before their eyes an essential aspect of what had to be fought for and preserved.

Not that he cut himself off from the world and its harshest and most pressing realities. In any case, it would scarcely have been possible for him to do so. He had seen, from his observation post in Strasbourg, where he was teaching in the University after 1919, the transformations in the German Republic and the birth of Hitlerism, and he had denounced the steady progress of that abominable system. After 1940 he lost successively his brother-in-law, Dr. Georges Basch (who was unwilling to survive the shame of the armistice), and his father- and mother-in-law, Victor Basch and Madame Basch, old people of eighty who were murdered by the Militia and the Germans in a particularly atrocious way; he himself insisted on making enquiries on the spot, in Lyons, and calling for justice; and at that time a heavy price could be

paid for actions of this kind. His was not a mind to be satisfied with following military and political activity through the newspapers and the radio only; he liked to learn by gathering and analysing the signs and movements of public opinion. As he spoke with me the perspective we considered became a wide and penetrating view of the world situation, the two sides of the struggle, the effect of the war on the social scene; in his conversation one was aware all the time that behind the judgment of a scientific mind there lay decided and deeply felt ideas about humanity and society that the war had served only to strengthen. In short, while many scholars, even those highly distinguished within their own sphere, tend to stiffen slowly inside it, at the risk of a dangerous indifference to the political and social (and hence, the moral) conditions of their times and the practical application of their learning, Maurice Halbwachs's knowledge was, as should be the rule but is in fact rare, imbued with his conscience and humanity.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was lost to us just when, having been appointed to a Chair of Social Psychology at the Collège de France, and so freed from his university cares, he was going to give himself up entirely to research, carrying it further and bringing it afresh into the area between psychology and sociology—a delicate region where there is so much work to be done and where his comprehensive thought, remaining independent of any system, was so precious. There was still much for him to do. The work he leaves, even as it is, is considerable, and amongst the most important, judged by concrete results, in the sociology of the first half of the century; and it is so rich that I can mention here only a few aspects of it.

Born in Rheims in 1877, Maurice Halbwachs worked under Bergson for three years at the Lycée Henri IV and was greatly influenced by him. "I am not sure that his influence was not ineffaceable," he wrote. On leaving the Ecole Normale he was attracted by Leibnitz and wrote a small, clear and precise book<sup>1</sup> on that amazing philosopher, the

<sup>1</sup> *Leibnitz*, in the collection entitled "*Philosophes*", Paris, 1907; new edition, revised and annotated, Paris, 1928.

last of the great encyclopædic minds of modern times, a man both endearing and infuriating; Halbwachs traced the diverse facets of his subtle and multivalent thought faithfully, without overstressing any one side as the fundamental one (which Couturat, Russell and Baruzi did in their otherwise more important works). Halbwachs had worked in Hanover on the manuscripts of the author of the *Monadologie* and was to have assisted with the big international edition of the works of Leibnitz, so long awaited; it was prevented by the 1914 war and has never appeared. He did, however, take part in the preparation of the catalogue of Leibnitz manuscripts.

But the social sciences were soon to attract and hold his attention. He worked with Simiand, Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim especially, collaborated in *L'Année Sociologique*, wrote a law thesis consisting of two studies, one on social morphology and the other on political economy,<sup>1</sup> and took the first step in his great work on social psychology with his thesis on *La classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie*.<sup>2</sup>

The sub-title of this work was: "Research into the hierarchy of needs in contemporary industrial societies," and in this we see one of the constant themes of his work: the study, based on large-scale enquiries, of *needs* in our industrial civilization. Halbwachs' originality is already marked then in his concern with concrete facts, his desire not to dogmatize as Durkheim too often did, but to turn directly to reality for observation and, starting from that standpoint, to form general ideas, working hypotheses, theories and laws. He was undeniably much influenced by Durkheim's doctrines, especially in his early days. But once having plunged into reality, the young sociologist lost any rigidity and grew suspicious of over-systematic thinking.

For the study of workers' needs and expenditures Halbwachs in this work made use of two important sets of German statistics, both of 1909, one drawn up by the Imperial Office of Statistics and the other by the Union of Metal Workers. Through the dry arithmetic of these enquiries into family budgets we see

<sup>1</sup> Republished under the title, *La Population et les tracés de voies à Paris depuis cent ans*, Paris, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, 1913.

further into the daily life of working-class homes than we do through the picturesque monographs that satisfied Le Play. After a close discussion of sources, Halbwachs works out from them an exact method enabling him to establish averages and to see how the members of a social group grade their expenditures.

And here we first see Halbwachs's use of Durkheim's theory of collective representations. The individual believes that he must not simply look to the needs of the instant; he must also foresee future needs and limit present ones. In his foresight he is guided by the actions of other members of his group. Even the division of needs into four main groups (food, clothing, housing and other expenditures) is brought about by social environment. Now statistics show that manual workers tend to spend less on housing than members of other classes with the same income; this is particularly true when comparing them with the salariat, whose actual earnings are not always larger. Halbwachs observes that when there is an increase in wages in a manual workers' home more money is spent on food, while not much more is put aside for rent. So of the economic needs felt by manual workers amid the social conditions of their work, housing is felt to be the least important.

The position of a person in society should, therefore, reveal roughly how his expenses will be graded. It is worth pointing out here the way in which Halbwachs, carried away by the theory of collective representations, tends to make needs subjective. He thinks that the dominant factor imposing itself is not the need of each individual, even of the strongest ones, but "the representation of the group itself and what suits it," "the idea of what the family as a whole requires."<sup>1</sup> Here class and family feelings are intimately connected, to the observer of social psychology.

This scientific study of the grading of needs in the working class has a curious theory underlying it, suggestive in some ways of the place of the manual worker in contemporary capitalist society. This assigns the function of dealing with raw materials and transforming them, *producing* in fact, to a particular body of its members—the manual workers—who, to carry it out,

<sup>1</sup> *La Classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie*, p. 416.



"are forced into contact with inanimate things, into being alone with them and becoming cut off from the rest of the human community."<sup>1</sup> Of course the big modern factory makes use of collective labour (moving-belt production) and encourages team spirit. But this is not true sociability, which is primarily the enjoyment of inter-individual relations as they are found in family life, in a pleasant home atmosphere; the action of the factory is precisely calculated to destroy the taste for home life in the worker, as industry is organized at present. Here again, the relationship between psychological behaviour, needs, tastes and the place of the individual in production is brought out by Halbwachs.

A work written twenty years later, *L'Evolution des besoins dans les classes ouvrières*,<sup>2</sup> while it widens the field of statistical observation to other times and countries, confirms the chief conclusions of the 1913 thesis; English, German, American and French enquiries, together with contributions by the International Labour Office, make it possible to form some idea of the tendencies of social groups in analogous positions in the big Western industrial nations, as far as their expenses and needs are concerned. Taking 100 as the average space available per person in working-class homes, it is 154 for the salariat. The famous Ford enquiry in Detroit, in revealing a high proportion of wireless sets, pianos, mechanized household tools (washing machines, heating systems, cleaning gadgets), gives evidence of a certain plasticity in the choice of these objects; needs are "tendencies born of social life and evolving with it; they can be extended almost indefinitely."<sup>3</sup> Here again, we find in Halbwachs a marked propensity to consider needs as relative and subjective.

Is it not true, however, that workers, who are constantly given the means to compare their material conditions with those of other social classes, *also* express in their needs objective elements, a real *deficiency* in their food or clothing; for example, when they compare them with the standards of the lower middle classes or the *bourgeoisie*? The currents of collective

<sup>1</sup> "Matière et Société," *Revue philosophique*, July-August 1920, pp. 120-122.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

thinking are important, as Halbwachs has pointed out, but they include some objective elements. Whatever the true case (and in a detailed study there should be a discussion of the theory of the worker taken up with "raw materials" and "the machine" and "cut off from society"), Halbwachs's work constitutes a remarkable step forward from the orthodoxy of Durkheim which was too dogmatic and abstract. Halbwachs distinguishes himself from his master and surpasses him when he draws attention (within a specific social group, i.e., contemporary industrial society) to the conditions of production that affect people's mentality, their feelings, their social conduct and their needs. At the same time he approaches Marxist sociology in this direction.

His study *Les Causes du suicide*<sup>1</sup> also continues and modifies a classic work of Durkheim on the same subject. Durkheim maintained that fewer Catholics commit suicide than Protestants "because the society they belong to is more integrated; that is, its members are more closely connected one to another." To Durkheim integration is primarily a matter of religion; Halbwachs demonstrates that this view can be taken further. For Catholicism tends to be more widespread in rural areas, while Protestantism (implying individualistic feelings, initiative and a taste for worldly activities) is found more in urban districts. Accordingly, the analyst discovers behind the religious cohesiveness of the Catholic groups many other traits born of a rural way of life in which customs and traditions are handed down. So it is to this way of life (one in which Catholicism is a big element, but a partial one nevertheless) that we must look for the real causes of suicide and its varying forms and frequency from one country and epoch to another. The same sort of explanation will be sought for the low rate of suicide in England, as against the theory that it is common among Protestants; an anomaly that is explained when every aspect of English civilization is taken into account, when religion (and this is Halbwachs's original contribution) is replaced in the context of living conditions and the social and psychological climate that give it a particular aspect and effectiveness in each country.

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1930.

Throughout Halbwachs's work there is this supple handling of sociological methods, avoidance of pigeonholing and wonderful variety in the angles from which he considers reality. Shortly before his death he added to his book, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*,<sup>1</sup> which had made a considerable stir in its day, a curious essay, *La Topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre sainte*, "a study in collective memory" that, appearing as it did in the middle of the war,<sup>2</sup> has not attracted as much attention as its originality and importance merit. After enquiring into the actual geography of Palestine, the author studies the evolution of the placing of episodes in the life of Jesus. In fact, the legendary topography of the Gospels has undergone strange variations. Originally, at the time of their composition, there was a first organized localization within the framework of existing Jewish memories; after the conversion of Constantine there was another—at this time the Passion became the centre of Christian faith; at the time of the Crusades there was another, a rich flowering of consecrated spots. New localizations followed new needs and pious legends of European origin (for example, of the Way to the Cross). Pilgrims are anxious to find and place and apprehend with their senses, on the spot, the whole of the religious iconography of the cathedrals: "The whole of the Christian community takes over the Holy places and wants them to conform to the image they have made from afar over the centuries" (p. 204).

This is disquieting, and if it were admitted definitively it would be an important confirmation of the argument for the mythological origin of Christianity; certainly there is not one authentic trace in the whole of Palestine to mark the historical existence of Jesus. The synagogue of Capernaum where Jesus is supposed to have preached (one of the strongholds of those who upheld the historical origin) has been dated as second or third century A.D. by contemporary archæologists.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1925. This work was enriched by the posthumous publication of an essay, *La Mémoire collective* in the Bibliothèque de Sociologie contemporaine under the direction of Georges Gurwitsch (P.U.F., 1950).

<sup>2</sup> Paris, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Although Renan naturally did not know of recent archæological work, he made the following comment: "It looks as though, in the field of topography as well as history, there was a deep design to hide the traces of the great founder."



By and large it emerges from this fascinating and strictly objective study that the holy places have presented various appearances at various times, always bearing the stamp of the Christian groups that formed and placed them in accordance with their hopes and needs. And so we have a concrete example of the action in human groups of the collective memory whose general influence on individual remembrance Halbwachs had studied. In another sphere, this book touches the great works that, since David Strauss and Renan, have been devoted to the problems of the origins of Christianity; and there is more in it than the title implies. An indirect light is thrown (for this was not the author's primary intention) by the effects of collective memory and their sociological interpretation on the mythological and imaginative explanation of the legend of Jesus.

Towards the end of his life, social morphology and demography absorbed Halbwachs more and more. Having taken an early interest in statistics and become adept at making use of them in the social sciences, he was applying them to a study of the population. In Volume VII of *L'Encyclopédie française* he gave the results of many years of research, together with a sociological interpretation (which is added, without contradicting them, to the biological explanations) of fertility and particularly the numbers of each sex born. It seems to demonstrate that the distribution of ages in a social group is at any rate a partial explanation of the proportion of births of one sex; so that it is not a matter of chance that a particular proportion of boys is born in one society. Here is another example of the necessity for co-operation between the different sciences of man in the study of human affairs.

Elsewhere, starting from the consideration of needs, whose internal links with the different social environments he elucidated in his thesis, he picked up and developed considerably Durkheim's rudimentary and somewhat abstract social morphology. Halbwachs often discerns behind morphological facts the economic structure, and in particular the powerful influ-

It is unlikely that it will ever be possible to fix, on this terribly devastated soil, the spots where mankind would like to come and kiss his footprints." Quoted by Prosper Alfarc, *Les Manuscrits de la " Vie de Jésus " d'Ernest Renan*, Paris, 1939.

ence of the class group. Thus, in his study *Les Mobiles dominants qui orientent l'activité individuelle dans la vie sociale*,<sup>1</sup> he seeks this influence successively in the peasant classes, the *bourgeoisie*, amongst the workers in the big industries and finally amongst the lower middle classes. He writes: "Each of these social categories determines the conduct of its members and imposes definite motivations on them; it stamps each category with such a peculiar and distinctive mark, so forcibly that men of different classes, even though they live amid the same surroundings and are contemporaries, sometimes strike us as belonging to different species of humanity. Thus the determinants governing men, and their dispositions in general more often than not seem quite relative to their situation in society."

I have here done no more than give a rough outline of a copious body of work that touches on many concrete problems; and of the small but vital array of subjects he dealt with. The reader will nevertheless have gathered something of the importance of the results and the original freedom of approach that characterizes this work. Using Durkheim's vigorous thinking as a stimulus, not as a rigid formulary, and welcoming every new scientific undertaking, particularly those of American sociology, Maurice Halbwachs is, alongside Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch, one of the leading contemporary scholars whose researches simply through their inner cogency, without any theoretical predisposition, to some extent link up with Marxist sociology in some of its dominant themes.

Maurice Halbwachs was always rigorously honest in using the tools of scientific research, as he was in every action of his life. Intellectual integrity was but one aspect of a moral quality that was an essential part of him. There is no need to make fine phrases at the end of this essay which, in evoking a man and his work, aspires to be nothing more than a farewell and a promise; Maurice Halbwachs had no use for words that exaggerated the real thought or feeling, either in scientific work or in daily life. I have tried to describe him as a true man in every sense of the word. But he would have liked us to pledge ourselves to fight, each with his own weapons and utmost

<sup>1</sup> The present work.

strength, for the diffusion and ultimate triumph in society of the values of truth and justice and humanity which he served so nobly in a world in turmoil, and to which his whole life, his work and his death stand as witness.<sup>1</sup>

GEORGES FRIEDMANN

<sup>1</sup> These pages on Maurice Halbwachs appeared in *Europe*, January 1946, pp. 45-54, and they are reproduced here with the permission of the editor.



## CHAPTER I

# Introduction

WHY is it that in general we think of the people of the past, and particularly the distant past, as being so entirely different from ourselves? We cannot, of course, go back in time; society no more than the individual can travel over again the way it has come. But this is not the only reason for our feeling that the figures of the past are alien to us. They seem distant not only in time but in the scale of evolution, as though they were of another species, outwardly like us but dwelling in an atmosphere in which the very air was different, and the ideas and feelings and even the sensations cannot have been the same as to-day's. This is much what we feel when we read history books or historical novels, or visit old buildings and places where things have stood still for half a century; we feel it even more strongly when we try to evoke the inhabitants of such places, who went about their lives inside these walls and seem now as inaccessible as ghosts or the unknown dwellers on some far-off planet.

Such feelings would be easy to explain if man himself (i.e., the human race) were subject to evolution quite apart from all changes in social environment. Then we should not think of ourselves as beings of the same substance with similar organs, capable of identical reactions to impressions from the world around us. Each generation could be considered as a new phase in organic evolution. It would contribute a collection of physical types to the world: certain temperaments, statures, features, expressions, manners of speaking and gestures would be met with in one epoch, then their cast would be broken and they would be found again no more. Hesiod and other ancient writers did believe that various races of men succeeded each other on earth, each one appearing and then dying out without leaving a trace beyond a

few bones to suggest a race of giants, or the memory of exploits that must have called for more vigorous bodies than ours.

But such theories seem to have been illusory. Without going as far as Michelet, who said that man has changed less than any other creature or inanimate object since the world began, we must acknowledge that, taking into account our bodies, structure, organic life, senses and nervous system only, there is no such difference between us and the men preserved by the ashes of Herculaneum and Pompeii, or even prehistoric men, as to make us deny that we are their kin. The human features of adults, children and old people as we find them in the paintings of every age are seen all around us and recognized to-day. The same oval face, carriage of the head, colour of the hair or flesh texture is found amongst our contemporaries exactly as it appears in a sixteenth-century portrait. The costume is different but the physical type is the same: the faces of the men and women outside the Palais-Royal on the eve of the Revolution are among us now and can be seen every day; the same faces were found amongst the Gauls and Franks, and the Flemings of the time of William of Orange. Every new branch on the tree of humanity is of the same substance; the leaves are shaped in the same pattern, the blossoms and fruits are indistinguishable.

It was Bergson who said: "There is a fundamental nature, and there are acquired characteristics that overlie, imitate, and are sometimes confused with it. . . . We subscribe too easily to the prejudice that the acquired intellectual and moral traits of the human race are passed on by heredity, incorporating themselves in the substance of individual organisms. If this were so, we should be born completely different beings from our ancestors. But it is education rather, manners, customs and even language, that preserve certain acquired intellectual and moral characteristics, and so transform the successive generations. If, however, every accretion resulting from the influence and action of society were removed from present-day man, he would turn out pretty well identical with his remotest ancestors." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*, 1932, p. 169.



Men, then, have been basically the same ever since the species first appeared with its fundamental characteristics, distinct from all other living things. Take a small child during the first two years of its life, or even later—it is not only a matter of its physical appearance but of its impressions, the ill-defined and shapeless realm of its concepts, its appetites, desires and emotions and its attitude towards objects and people. Where, in this respect, is the difference between a small child of the twentieth century in a peasant or working-class or *bourgeois* environment, and a small child in one of the tribes we call primitive, but which is in fact only slightly nearer the point of departure and so less far advanced? Throughout the time when its social environment has not yet affected its nature it is the same being, subject to the same forces in both cases, as Kipling's Mowgli. If this action of society were not felt from the moment the child first acquires habits, and especially when he begins to speak, we should still be in the same state as the earliest savages and our actions would have no motivations other than theirs.

We should take notice here of the extent to which man is conditioned by society; and the gulf (pointed out by Charles Blondel) between psycho-physiology, which for the most part adopts the biological standpoint and bears on that aspect of the psychological nature which is closely connected with the physical structure, and group psychology or collective psychology.<sup>1</sup> The former accounts for man's behaviour as it is in isolation, when he is unaware even of forming part of

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à la psychologie collective*, 1929, pp. 32 and 193. See too my review in *Revue philosophique*, 1929, nos. 5 and 6: *La Psychologie collective d'après Charles Blondel*. Summarizing Auguste Comte's idea, Dr. Blondel says: "There is not one psychology, there are three. In the first place, psycho-physiology specializes in the motor-sensory functions. It is a biological science, in which psychological phenomena are explained wholly in terms of physiology and morphology, without any other considerations such as the influence of social existence being taken into account. . . . Next comes psycho-sociology, a psychology of man as he appears in a historical and social context. This study is a by-product of sociology and would not exist without it. It is a psychology of the species rather than a psychology of collectivity or collective psychology, since it offers a true psychology of man in general—for human nature is not divisible, and the social aspect is simply an extension of the biological. Finally there is a strictly individual psychology." *Ibid.*, p. 32. We should be inclined to label the first kind "a psychology of the species."

human society; that is, with his mechanical or instinctive reactions to various aspects of the outer world. His considered feelings, more or less intelligently assembled along with representations connected with their ends and motives, can only be studied and explained by replacing the individual in the group where he is normally found and with which all his thoughts have to do.

What motives could activate individuals in social life other than those which are presented, suggested and often enough imposed on them by society? Religious tendencies are not found outside religious groups; family feelings cannot develop without the domestic circle.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

We must not forget, of course, that the influences of a group affect different individuals unequally, as their personal dispositions vary and as they may already be feeling the influence of other groups outside the one in question.

Consider, for example, a religious group. Among the faithful within it who accept its prescriptions in theory and as far as possible in fact, those who show more ardour and proselytizing spirit can be picked out from the mass of the lukewarm or indifferent. A very important and original enquiry has just been carried out by Gabriel Le Bras,<sup>1</sup> on religious belief in France, based on the up-to-date reports and records made in the parishes and dioceses which show the official state of their members' souls. The framework is quite simple: it sets out how many amongst the faithful really practise their religion, going to mass and frequently to vespers as well on every Sunday of the year, communicating at least at Easter, and so on; how many practise their faith only at the four big moments of their lives—birth, adolescence, maturity and death—using the church for their baptism, first communion, marriage and funeral; and finally, how many marry and are buried with civil rites only, although they have been baptised.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Transformations religieuses des françaises depuis la fin du XVIIe siècle* (*Annales sociologiques*, series E, section 2, 1937, p. 12). (This enquiry has been carried much further since 1937. In particular, see *Introduction à l'étude de la pratique religieuse en France*, in the collection of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Religious Sciences section, Vol. LVII, 1943-45, in 2 vols., and many articles in reviews.—Editor.)



The results of this enquiry will be referred to later. For the moment we shall simply point out that there are reasons of two types at the root of these various attitudes. One is to do with temperament, character and mentality; one man may be born with a tendency to mysticism and inner meditation, while another feels that he needs ritual and wants to belong to an organized church. There are real spiritual kindreds of such people; they are not confined to one particular creed or another, but are scattered in time and space among all the different religious sects. People of this kind become entirely dominated by religion because they are temperamentally prepared to welcome it; they are the soil that has long awaited the sowing of the seed. Once it reaches them, all their latent propensities are quickened and their religion takes its individual form.

Others offer less of a foothold to religion, either because they are born with smaller spiritual enthusiasm and emotion or for the opposite reason that they are subject to stronger pulls; their appetites and passions sway and dominate them. They belong to a religious sect because they were born into a family already attached to it by habit and because it is correct, and they are among the passive flock who do as others do. Their form of religion is certainly outward, imposed on them and without inner significance. The faithful of this kind make the obligatory gestures and do not mind wearing the label with the name of their group as long as the adherence of others encourages them; everything depends on the strength of the belief around them and on the number of other believers.

The other reason for variety in religious attitudes is this: through their jobs, their circles of friends and their habitats, men belong to other groups that encourage or discourage the religious tendencies in them. In sum, here are all the other aspects of personality apart from those consciously connected with the religious group.

And the same is true of many other social controlling factors. To begin with, family feeling, which is usually experienced by every member of the family group. Occasionally a father or mother or son hates his kin, or is even coldly

indifferent to them. "I loathe the family," declared a writer who prided himself on his detachment. But on reading Jules Renard's *Journal*, which summons all our sympathies for Poil de Carotte's martyrdom (that is, for himself as a child), we must not forget the lines, or rather the pages, devoted to the death of his father: his grief is heartfelt and profound; he does not attempt to hide his touching regrets, but echoes and re-echoes them without a thought for anyone else or any restraint, as though he has abandoned his role in the book for a time.

All the same, there are different depths of family feeling, depending on whether a person is naturally inclined to flourish in the warmth of the home and the domestic atmosphere. This explains why there is always one person in a family (not necessarily the "head of the household" or the mother or eldest son—it can be an old aunt or a distant cousin) who excels in devotion to family tradition, really understands it and ensures its continuity. Around him or her, forming the centre in a sense, the domestic spirit is found in lesser degrees of intensity; for many members of the family it depends on force of habit and would soon wane or even disappear altogether if they were not close to each other and frequently brought together.

Innate tendencies, then, always enter into the picture: it is possible that everyone loves his kin as much as though he had chosen them, but family ties are reinforced by individual, almost elective, affinities.<sup>1</sup> And there are some people who find fulfilment only in the role of father or mother or husband or wife or brother, etc. The family would be no more than an inert collection of individuals if it were not animated and quickened by people of this kind; they are a sort of natural gift to it.

A last example is taken from the sphere of politics: how shall we deal with the feelings that attach us to one party or cause? These feelings are so widespread as sometimes dominate a man entirely, dictating his words and actions, turning him

<sup>1</sup> For the role of personality, and the different personalities of the various members of the family, see my book: *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris, 1925 (the family's collective memory, p. 222).

against his best friends; while they are quite unimportant to many people, and even at some epochs to the majority.

These are not, however, ephemeral and superficial concerns. Political convictions (whatever their depth and however unimportant a part they play in many lives) and the feelings which bind a man to those who think as he does on governmental matters, are relatively stable and change only very slowly in any country—this has been demonstrated by comparisons made between the electoral results from one period to the next. André Siegfried observed the distribution of parties in a whole section of France over a long period, and he emphasized how stable the situation was over half a century.<sup>1</sup>

So political attitudes do not seem to result from individual temperaments, spirits and character, but to be connected with permanent collective conditions that change only very slowly. This is straightforward enough, and Siegfried indicates what the conditions are: the continued existence in Anjou, Maine, and a large part of Brittany and Normandy, of big estates that were not broken up by the revolution; the effective power and prestige of the great families that carry on the old nobility, either bearing the old name or, having succeeded to the property, taking up the same position in public esteem. At all events, they have managed to maintain their privileges in so far as the law has let them. They have kept in full force many old customs whereby the country people are morally dependent on them.

(Elsewhere, and even within these regions along the coasts, at the mouths of the great rivers and at railway centres, a new spirit arises; for the population is detached from traditions and dominated by what can be called class representations; at factory exits, in the districts where they live, the workers meet and mingle and become aware of each other as opposed to other social groups; they feel the identity of their situation and the interests they have in common.)

These contrasts are of course very old; they existed in the very dawn of political life and theory, in fifth- and sixth-century Athens. Even then there were conservatives, like

<sup>1</sup> *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest*, Paris, 1913.

Plato, attached to the right of inheritance, regretting the caste system—vestiges of which were still found in Crete and the Peloponnese. They favoured an agricultural community, a frugal and simple way of life, limited wealth. Mistrusting trade because it introduced a taste for novelties, they made every effort to limit relations with foreign countries as far as possible, even to suppress them altogether. In the other camp the democrats, rejecting the out-of-date ideal of an archaic country dominated by old men and priests, preferred to allow the currents of modern life to penetrate their society and bear them along. They gave every facility to merchants, developed the navy and commerce, maintained contacts with islanders and distant coastal people, and tried to build up public wealth by exchanges with foreign countries.<sup>1</sup>

So throughout the ages the differences and oppositions between political trends and parties recur; and they can be compared from one epoch or form of society to another, since they correspond to a difference in economic and social situations which is itself a permanent characteristic of any national or city life.

Nevertheless, in this sphere as well as in those of religious beliefs and family feeling, political motivations clearly affect thought and living conditions in very different degrees.

The political furnace is one that attracts some people strongly; they bask in its warmth, are foremost in stoking it, and even occasionally fall in and are devoured by the flames. Others are more half-hearted about it, observing it from a distance, or ignoring it altogether and making no effort to approach it. And just as there are people who practise religious rites only at birth, first communion, marriage and death, so there are some who take an interest in politics only from time to time, for example, during elections.<sup>2</sup> Apart from these there are some who are completely indifferent and do not even make use of their four-yearly vote. Again, there

<sup>1</sup> Von Wilamowitz Moellendorff, *Platon*, 1. Band, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> A further witness to this, according to Durkheim in *Le Suicide, étude sociologique*, 1897, 2nd ed., 1930, is the fact that at election times the proportion of suicides drops noticeably and rises again afterwards. See too my book: *Les Causes du suicide*, Paris, 1930, pp. 336 and 349.

are the "responsible citizens" who read newspapers with definite politics, or whose main interest in the purely informative papers is in the items concerned with parliamentary or trade union elections, and who may even be members of a party. The extreme group is made up not only of professional politicians, but of people whose interest in politics is exceptionally keen, and who are particularly susceptible to the type of emotion and excitement engendered by them: arouasers of public interest and propagandists who try to wear down and dispirit their opponents, to win over waverers and win back defaulters by speeches, newspaper articles and talk; at the same time, of course, confirming themselves in their own beliefs and vocations.

We have only to glance at ancient and modern history to see that the political leaders of any epoch have been those whose individual characters disposed and attracted them to politics; they have expansive, impassioned natures, pugnacious dispositions, and a turn for intrigue and the handling of cliques, as Fourier would have said (we should call it partisan spirit to-day); a taste for public life that, like the sea, has its storms and calms, its uproar and great vistas—or so the "born politician" likes to feel as he breasts meetings of all kinds where the tides of public opinion seethe and change and where feelings and thoughts are shared or, at any rate, always in contact with other feelings and thoughts.

Those who make public affairs their business are often, too, prepared and predisposed for them by their environment and social position, their family or professional group. And this works in two ways and on two rather different levels.

Consider, for instance, Cicero's definition in the *Pro Sestio* of the *optimates*—the "orthodox," we might call them, without any disparaging intention: "They are the leaders of the Council of State (*principes consilii publici*) . . . they belong to those large classes eligible for membership of the Senate, the knights, tax-gatherers and tribunes, Romans resident both in municipal towns and country districts (*municipales rustique Romani*). They are all those, in fact, who serve the wishes, the interests and the expectations of men of integrity, soundness of mind and ease of circumstance." This is indeed one of



the sources of what might be called the personnel of political life. There is another, however, which is less pure, even positively muddy and contaminated in the eyes of the Roman orator. It consists of those who are not in power (because of their situation in life), and who would like to be; who, "conscious of their crimes, seek to cause revolution and changes of government; or those who, owing to a sort of innate madness, live by civil discord and sedition; or those who, on account of embarrassment in their private affairs, would rather perish in a general conflagration than by themselves."

It is a tendentious diptych: Cicero is exalting his friends, blackening his enemies, giving a moral significance to something that is basically a class distinction. But it is true all the same that there are social circles from which the rulers of society, or those who aspire so to be, are recruited, while there are other circles which produce, if not revolutionaries, at any rate the leaders of the opposition. Under the monarchy in France, a system which did not encourage true political life and activity, there were nevertheless times of crisis when the two "sources" of political life can be seen quite clearly: the period of Etienne Marcel, the struggles between Armagnacs and Burgundians and the municipal risings of the sixteenth century; later, when the "politiques," who were moderate, serious and conciliatory in the public interest, came into conflict with the fierce fanatics and intriguers of the Catholic League—a political and religious movement in which the religious motivation was probably more coloured by the political than vice versa, but which produced, as a late backwash, the Fronde, in which the political motivation is clearly paramount and magnificently embodied in a first-class politician and born intriguer like the Cardinal de Retz.

But it is a century and a half later, during the French revolution, that the two kinds of politician emerge most clearly: the architects and the overthrowers as they could be labelled; but both kinds appear at every phase and in every act of this concentrated political drama; and in the course of the rapid changes of prospect many an overthrower of one day reveals the next that he can be constructive and orderly;

we even come across the two contradictory natures temporarily united in some one individual or other.

Of course, agitators are sometimes produced by the higher classes and exceptional men with governmental and politically constructive gifts do arise from the lower classes. Individual causes and social conditions combine thus in different proportions and produce unpredictable results, fashioning and moulding certain particular characters and minds destined to be more under the spell of political ideas than others, or even to be their very incarnation and living exemplars.

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But however strongly we take into account the natural propensities of individuals, and the differences between them even when they form part of the same group—differences which are the effect simply of their personal constitutions—we must nevertheless acknowledge that they would not have blossomed and stood out so clearly without a further “climate”; that is, if they had not found themselves in a particular environment or social system. In fact, the various dominant factors under discussion do not appear fully formed in a man’s mind as though they merely developed from a germ in which they could be discovered all ready to show themselves. One might as well maintain that a man is born a lawyer, a clockmaker or a chemist.

Some people do think we may be born with decided religious tendencies. This begs the question : Tendencies towards which religion? Consider a Catholic, an ardent proselyte, realizing to the full the church’s ideal of the believer or even of the saint, his characteristics and personality shaped by a long tradition; suppose he had been born a Protestant, or rather a Buddhist or Moslem, or a member of a tribe that worships totems and practises barbarous rites. Is it possible to believe that in any of these groups, and according to their internal standards, his conduct would have seemed so edifying, or would he have felt the same zeal for such different and even opposite creeds and forms of worship? The first Christians were not recruited from among the most religious

pagans. Many who choose their faith, joining one denomination or another as adults, are attracted to a particular religion by the very thing that they have found lacking in another.

Of course there are analogies and affinities between the priests of every religion: a country parish priest calling God's blessing down upon the fields and flocks could well be imagined offering up a sacrifice for a family or a city in pagan times. The sovereign pontiff of to-day in his attitude and priestly pomp to some extent recalls the *pontifex maximus* of ancient times. But it must not be forgotten that in Roman times the priesthood was a magistrature, generally lasting for a year only, and that their creed, like that of the Greeks, was markedly political in character.<sup>1</sup>

If one looks beyond the outward show, the gestures and forms, it is striking how the different creeds satisfy very different instincts and feeling and above all how they conform to national character and custom. The structure of religion and the system of beliefs underlying it are not the flowering of natural tendencies common to a certain number of men. It is rather that the religious group picks out, appeals to and uses for its own purposes those of its members who best reflect it; and it modifies and moulds them in its own way, making its own spokesmen, who were not born to be such but had to be shaped within the group, possibly helped along by outside factors, and animated with its spirit.

Saint Martin, who would have been a coarse, common soldier had he remained a pagan all his life, is now a leading figure in the Catholic church; probably he grasped its general trend at once. On their side, the Christians recognized him as one who would in the name of Christianity exorcise the devil and give mankind an example of penitence. They considered that he was called to a higher sphere. But others, taken up with worldly things, whose education has been a sophisticated one and who possess fine, entirely pagan minds, with no knowledge of any formalist and ritualist religion, have been attracted to Jansenism; for example, to the most

<sup>1</sup> Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, 1864, and Jules Martha, *Les Sacerdotes Athéniens*, 1882.



narrow and rigorous forms of Christian spiritual thought. To moderate and practical minds, such people have sunk to a lower plane.

The religious group recruits itself from the highest and lowest social and cultural levels. With elements borrowed from other groups and backgrounds it builds itself up, fashions new examples and dominant themes in its own image, congratulating itself on discovering such good material, easily moulded to the shape it seeks or even already, by chance, approximating to it.

The same thing is true of family feeling—even though here we seem to be touching on something more primitive, an organic or animal characteristic, a basic feature of our species; it is made up of a group of sentiments with discoverable causes. We may question whether these affect people individually, and whether human beings are born members of a family group, with all the apparatus for understanding and identifying themselves with it surrounding them from the moment of birth. Potentially, of course, every man is a son, a husband, a father and a grandfather; he has only to grow older day by day to enter naturally into these successive roles. But is the role cut out for the actor, or is it not he who adapts himself to each one as it presents itself? There have been in the past, and there still are, many different family patterns, without going back to the clan system and what is called “the classificatory structure of kinship,” and there has been a definite evolution from the great patriarchal family to the monogamic family which tends to consist only of the two parents and the children. Neither father nor child, of course, occupies the same position in these two cases, and they could not be interchanged with their equivalents in the other type of family.

Family feeling in the first type of family involves the tradition of the house, pride in the name and devotion to its heritage; nothing is innate, it has to be acquired, studied and handed down.<sup>1</sup> The strength of these feelings resembles that

<sup>1</sup> For the traditional family, see Le Play, *Les Ouvriers européens*, 5 vols., 1878, particularly Vol. III, *Population stables soumises aux meilleures coutumes de l'Orient et du Nord*.

of natural instincts. But there is nothing instinctive about representations and affective conditions whose intensity is explained by the very great length of time the group has existed, the number of its members and its stability and standing. Each member is aware of the volume and the mass of the great family, and of its span in space and time. The father's prestige is such, and the children's compliance so complete, in these societies that it is hard to distinguish the individual from his function, or his personal qualities from those acquired simply by practice. But among the whole body of kindred there are, however, as we have said, some who stand out and who act as guides and examples; intelligence added to experience, more forcible characters or stronger wills, greater readiness to sacrifice individuality to the group, greater sensibility and susceptibility to its collective good or bad fortune—these are all explanations of why some members of the widespread family circle are more affected by family feeling than others. At all events, a lengthy education and an environment dominated by family images are needed for these qualities to appear.

But the conjugal family calls for a different moulding of character, and a different order of feeling is involved.<sup>1</sup> If a young man feels oppressed and hemmed in by the great traditional order with its grandparents and distant cousins, he will make neither a good son nor a good leader of the family. If he breaks away and founds his own household, living with his children and wife apart from the rest of his kin, there is no reason why he should not make a good husband and father; the family group will be a small one, but its members will be all the more closely knit for that; the traditions of short standing, but all the more vivid and real.

And these uncomplicated families, of which the hard core is the married couple, find themselves placed amid other similarly simple households. There is a common way of life, neighbours influence each other quite strongly, and whole

<sup>1</sup> Durkheim, *La Famille conjugale* (*Revue philosophique*, January-February 1921). Lecture taken from an unpublished course on the family, given at the University of Paris. See too Georges Davy, *Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1931; *La Famille et la parenté d'après Durkheim*, p. 103.

series of changes are set about by their interaction. It is not enough to shut oneself up in one's home to build up a sense of the family. A condition of the monogamic family is that it is very open to outside influence; the parents and children mix a good deal with other families, and take part in general social life; as long as they are young, at any rate, they go out frequently. The father and child in this modern environment are very different from what they were like in the time of the great tribal families, and yet they are also shaped for their roles by a whole set of social influences. It is simply that modern society is succeeding in tapping the latent capacity of many of its members for creating and developing the conjugal union and a form of domestic life adapted to present-day living conditions. They are characteristics that would have remained undeveloped and inaccessible in any other form of civilization.

Finally, are we to believe that the inclinations to political activity and thought which men are supposed to possess even before they become involved in social life can develop without particular fostering conditions? Surely the shape in which these tendencies actually emerge—one that is never wholly congenial to its individual exponents—is dictated by current customs and beliefs, the product of the moment in human development at which the group has arrived?

Take, for example, the people of the time of the French Revolution. It is extraordinary that within a few months so many men should have risen from the people, or to be more precise from the lower middle classes (a much smaller group), who could feel so strongly about the issues involved in assemblies, divisions and committees; that under the pressure of events such a wide range of efforts, emotions and political ideas should have been concentrated in so small a body of human beings. It is all the more surprising when one considers that none of the principal figures on the scene had been individually prepared for the part he was to play. Many of them took no more than a slight interest in public affairs in the provincial towns where they lived quietly enough before the revolution. But once on the scene where such things were of consequence, mixing with other men of their own type, some

of them were forced to take the lead and become the others', and the group's, representatives.

It is possible, of course, that they were singled out for more prominent positions than the others because their convictions were so strong and the way in which they acted on them so forcible, and because they lent a more original turn to the debates and had stronger personalities. But the group really gave them leading roles because they seemed most characteristic of it and were guided by it in their emotions. "I follow him who best follows me"; such is the attitude of a body of men dominated by a powerful collective passion. Chance and the luck of the draw play their part in this kind of selection and political success. Often it is enough simply to let the current carry one along to succeed. The personality will stand out in the course of debates and contests as something different from what it would have been in other environments or times.

When we think of the political figures of our own days we tend to assume that they have been moulded entirely by their own natural propensities and do not take into account enough what they have acquired from their surroundings as they have risen, from the local peasant or urban assemblies whose spirit they have absorbed slowly and imperceptibly to the parliamentary committees which have imbued them with their traditions and made them neither more nor less than the best interpreters of general trends and opinions.

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The essence of the present analysis is simply this: that the various general determinants of conduct, such as family feeling, patriotism, political views (and the same thing applies to them all) do not affect every man or every member of a group equally as raindrops or sunbeams affect all the trees in the forest—this is obvious enough. But, besides this, there must in every society be a gradation through those who are most sensitive to general ideas and feelings and who best manifest them, to the more indifferent, those more difficult to stir and interest. This diversity between the members and differentiation in the structure of the group is the only way of guarantee-

ing the continuance and maintaining the strength of the trends that characterize it—the determinants of social conduct for which it stands and which it imposes on those who make it up.

In fact, the conservation of such trends and beliefs is not an automatic process brought about by the mere weight of inertia. On the contrary, as time goes by beliefs tend to grow feebler and opinions hazier, since they spread among a fairly passive human group not naturally disposed to make the necessary effort to grasp them. So there has to be a section of the group which is constantly reinforcing them, where they become clearer and more effective; and within this section certain individuals who concentrate these beliefs and opinions within themselves, and who hold them so strongly that they radiate out amongst the whole group.

We have observed this in the religious group, the family and the political party; in each of these societies it is always the role of a few to stand most clearly for common tendencies and to fortify these by their example at least. In addition to this, mankind's thought needs to embody itself in human beings of its own kind, but which it imagines far above itself in intelligence and instincts, to embody these very tendencies in them as though they were both their trustees and their source.

One has only to remember the Emperor of China, the son of Heaven, who every new year walked through the chambers of his palace that faced towards the cardinal points, and stopped at each in turn, facing north, east, south and west, in order to re-establish order and equilibrium both in his own empire and throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> In this way the whole of society seemed to be concentrated in the emperor. Similarly, certain individuals seem to us to awaken faith in the church, family feeling in the domestic group, political conviction in the parties.

Although this action of individuals on the whole and of the centre on the parts is constantly felt in one form or another, there are times (possibly periodically recurring ones) when it seems particularly effective. The collective conscience seems

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Granet, *La Civilisation chinoise. La vie publique et la vie privée*, Paris, 1929, p. 446 (*la "Maison du Calendrier"*). See too the same author's *La Pensée chinoise*, Paris, 1934, p. 92.



to need stirring and strengthening at longer or shorter intervals, and only if this is done can the general determinants of conduct reach individual thinking, there to take on new life. If we query what the determinants affecting men in social life are, the answer is that we must know the moment at which we are considering the individual men. It is not that they live double or triple lives; of course, if one analyses the conscience of one man, one's own, for example, either by observing oneself or by judging one's actions, over a necessarily limited time (which can nevertheless include a succession of phases), the diversity of motives which have affected and are still affecting one is clear. It is none the less true that, according to the particular moment, we are most strongly influenced by one particular determinant, and the action of others is necessarily very reduced.

If, on the other hand, we consider not the individual's point of view but successively that of each of the various groups he belongs to, we shall have to examine these groups at a moment when the collective life is at its most intense, and we shall see that the life of each group unfolds in alternating periods or phases of varying lengths: a phase of full-blown life, thoroughly self-aware and fulfilled, then a slowed-up phase of desiccation and indifference in the monotonous pursuit of daily tasks and thoughts.<sup>1</sup> There are times of religious ceremonies, family reunions for a wedding, a birth or an anniversary, times of political strife; and afterwards, rest and relative forgetfulness of the emotions and activities undergone.

Now if collective life unfolds in phases in this way, as though following a series of cycles, it is because any expenditure of energy, whether affective or mental, can only be temporary, and one has to recover from it and repair one's forces; but even more than this it is because there is a duality of elements in any society, as we have seen, some very representative of the group and more imbued with its essential qualities than the other members, who are passive rather, and carried along by currents of thought that sometimes stir them to action; but, left to their own devices, they would soon give up.) Hence the

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Loi en sociologie*, in *Science et Loi*, Cinquième Semaine internationale de Synthèse, 1933, p. 187.

necessity for periodic renewals and recreations by the more active elements.

We should be wrong to conclude, however, that the forces dominating our behaviour in society are only individual ones, invented by some, accepted and propagated by others—inventions followed up by imitations, as Gabriel Tarde maintained.<sup>1</sup> For the individuals who seem the most active of all, the only truly active members of the group, have been shaped by it in its own image as we have seen, and all their originality and prestige derive from the fact that they concentrate within themselves a larger part than most of the collective representations, and can hold to them for a longer time. We must not be too easily satisfied with the idea of an élite and a mass, of personalities who alone count and anonymous groups, material that is quite shapeless or only moulded by those who break away from it; we should rather consider the number of individuals or personalities that any social environment produces, their quality and the intensity and vitality of self-consciousness within the whole group.

This once established, if we wish to review and describe the chief determinants inspiring men in social life, how shall we set about it? We shall not start off with a list of the determinants of our "behaviour" as the psychologists call it—a list such as a psychologist would have no difficulty in drawing up in advance; such a thing can be found in many textbooks of sociology, and it is not for us to question the instructional value of such a presentation.<sup>2</sup> But an enquiry must be set about differently from the beginning. The general controlling factors, such as family feeling, ambition, thrift, seeking after material possessions and honours, the desire to better oneself; none of these is found alone or unmixed in any one person. Each feels them because they are felt by the group he is a member of, and their shape and intensity are brought about by the conditions

<sup>1</sup> *Les Lois de l'imitation*, Paris, 1895, 4th edition, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> William MacDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, London, 1921, and *The Group Mind: a Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology with Some Attempt to apply them to the Interpretation of National Life and Character*, Cambridge, 1920. See, too, G. Davy, *Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1931, Pt. 3; *La Psychologie sociale de MacDougall et la Sociologie durkheimienne*, pp. 159ff.

peculiar to the group and its structure and regulations with other groups. Accordingly, we are proposing to take a scientific excursion through the social world. We shall not visit isolated examples of the human species as though they were carnivorous animals in the cages of the zoo, or marine creatures divided up behind glass in an aquarium; but we shall look at men going about their natural way of life so as to reveal human nature to us in all the fullness of its instincts and propensities as a social nature.

We shall concentrate on the various human groups, establish the dominant collective representations within them and what their strength and extent are as well as their limits. We shall also consider their interconnections, and try to find out whether they correspond to the various phases of an evolution of which we see the successive periods juxtaposed in modern society; and what can be forecast for the near future on the basis of this comparison. It is within the framework of the various social classes, the widest and the most natural, the least artificial of all the structures affecting men living in society, that we shall pursue our examination of collective determinants—prepared, so that nothing be forgotten, to go back later to other categories and other forms of association.



## CHAPTER II

# Traditional Civilization and the Peasant Classes

### AGRICULTURAL METHODS AND LOVE OF THE SOIL

ACCORDING to recent statistics, the population of the world is about 2,000 million: half of these in Asia, slightly more than a quarter (545) million in Europe, 250 million in the two Americas and about 150 million in Africa.<sup>1</sup> The world is vast. If we consider only what is called Western civilization, including America, we are dealing with roughly three-eighths of the total population. And we have very little information as to the customs, institutions and social patterns of some regions within this area; for example, in the U.S.S.R., with over 200 million inhabitants, in South America, and even in south-east Europe. In fact we can speak with confidence of only a quarter of the human race.

Of course, this section of the population is more important in the world of to-day than one would guess by looking at the figures. It contains the most advanced forms of culture and civilization, and its influence on the rest of the world is becoming stronger and more widespread all the time. It stands in much the same position as Greece and Rome in the ancient world.

But the most important consideration is that, although this

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Willcox, *Population of the Earth*, in *International Migrations*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Vol. II, New York, 1931. See, too, *L'Encyclopédie française*, Vol. VII; *L'Espèce Humaine*, section 3; *Le point de vue de nombre*, 1935, 7-78-3, by Maurice Halbwachs. (The increase in the world's population since this book was written does not alter Halbwachs' argument. Figures issued in 1950 by the United Nations Statistical Office gave Asia (without the U.S.S.R.) a population of 1,272 million, Europe (without the U.S.S.R.) 396 million, Africa 198 million, North America 216 million, South America 111 million, Oceania 13 million and the U.S.S.R. (1946 figure) 193 million.—Editor.)

study deals with a limited period—the contemporary one—and restricts itself to observable facts, the Western world offers a very wide range of subjects at present. The most advanced social systems are found alongside many instances of a way of life that is a survival from the recent or distant past. A number of countries, and whole areas of others, still have methods of production and ways of life like those found in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or even under the feudal system of the Middle Ages. These contrasts make it easier for us to trace what has happened and what obstacles have been met with, the forces of inertia present in society that have slowed down the rhythm of evolution.

We are in fact living in a period characterized by constant, rapid and fundamental change in all the circumstances of life; change that is affecting our modes of thinking and our ideas and beliefs powerfully. Social groups break up, lose their traditions and with them the possibility of surviving amid surroundings no longer favourable to them; they know they are on the wane; sometimes we actually watch them disappear. At the same time others start and develop, bit by bit taking over many elements of those that are on their way out, creating a new environment for men and imposing new ideas and sensibilities on them.

Casting our minds back two or three generations, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, it looks as though the changes that have come about since then are probably bigger and more decisive than those we should see if we went back a further five or six centuries, or even more.

Man's condition in the past was characterized above all by his attachment to traditions, his taste for stability and hostility towards anything new or strange. The men of those times seem to us to have led picturesque, varied lives, close to Nature and without a sense of stress. They are so alien to our urban civilization, dominated as it is by mechanical methods bringing a growing uniformity everywhere—into our actions, our thoughts and our needs—that we might easily think of them not as remote ancestors but as a different species.

But we cannot fail to be aware that many vestiges of past conditions are found in the country and the smaller towns,

where the atmosphere of bygone days seems to survive. So we shall start by looking at the peasant population, which has evolved much less than others; we may find in it a way of life and a form of collective behaviour determined by forces other than those which dominate our urban centres.

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To begin with we must get some idea of the proportion of peasants to world population, as there are some common opinions on this which cannot be accepted without examining the matter.

True enough, during the nineteenth century many peasants left the country for the towns and gave up their agricultural work for industrial jobs, but there are still considerable numbers of rural dwellers. If we calculate the proportion of the male rural population to the total active population in France, these are the figures<sup>1</sup>: in 1921 there were roughly 39 people employed in agriculture per 100 of the population<sup>2</sup>; but in many departments the proportion is higher, especially in the Alps, the Pyrenees, the central plateau and surrounding areas, and also in most of Brittany and its eastern borders. In these regions the proportion is as high as 55 per cent, 60 per cent and even 75 per cent and more. Only three departments, the Seine, the Nord and the Bouches-du-Rhône fall below 16 per cent because they contain very big towns.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> François Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1st year, 1930-31. The agricultural populace is in the same proportion as in France in Norway, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Denmark and Canada; it is considerably smaller in Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Holland and even Switzerland, and in Australia, the United States and the Argentine; much larger in Italy, Spain, Poland, Ireland and, in particular Portugal, with the U.S.S.R., Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria.

<sup>2</sup> (Present-day figures according to the Institut National de la Statistique. *Recensement général de la population effectué le 10 mars 1946. Etat civil et activité professionnelle de la population présente*: total active population, 20,520,466; active agricultural population, 7,290,794; the proportion is accordingly 35.5 per cent.—Editor.)

<sup>3</sup> (See in *Deuxième Semaine sociologique* arranged by the Centre d'Etudes sociologiques under the direction of Georges Friedmann; *Villes et Campagnes*, A. Colin (1953), pp. 124 and 125, the two maps giving the proportion of the agricultural populace. There are six departments with less than 12 per cent: the Seine, the Nord, the Bouches-du-Rhône, the Seine-et-Oise, the Meurthe-et-Moselle and the Rhône.—Editor.)

On examining how this proportion has evolved from 1866 to 1921 we shall see that it has not been a simple and continuous progress. Until 1880 it does not diminish noticeably. Between 1881 and 1901 it is clearly decreasing, whilst the proportion of industrial workers is growing. But from 1901 to 1921 it is constant and it looks as though the slight drop between 1921 and 1926 is a result of the loss of men in the war being replaced less in agricultural occupations than in others (for the female agricultural populace does not fall during the same period).<sup>1</sup>

We have established, then, that rural activity as a whole is still larger than is commonly believed. There was undoubtedly a relative decrease during the nineteenth century, but this does not mean there was an absolute one since the whole population increased during these seventy years.

Throughout the period, and especially at the end of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of men employed in agricultural work and living in the country left for the big towns to become industrial workers. Very few of these urban workers returned to the country. To have made the decision to break the traditional ties that bound them to the soil they must have been attracted by the advantages they saw in town workers' conditions. But, on the other hand, not all followed their example and many peasants quite deliberately preferred to remain in their villages; and this suggests that the peasant condition also has its advantages which are lost on leaving it. The rural population from which the workers in big industries were recruited seems to have been the lower part of the peasant class, those who had suffered the worst hardships of agricultural life; they were, above all things, aware of what made the town worker consider himself the superior of the peasant.

Possibly the peasant population has a greater sense of unity than we are accustomed to think. It is worth remembering that they are descended from the serfs of the old days, who constituted a well-defined juridical class throughout the

<sup>1</sup> (Cf. the report of the Institut National de la Statistique on the census of 1946, quoted above, p.xlv: "Between 1936 and 1946 the porportion of the population over 14 years of age engaged in agriculture diminished slightly. The proportion of active *men* in non-agricultural professions went up on the other hand."—Editor.)

Middle Ages and until the break-up of the *ancien régime*. To-day they are free from the various disabilities to which they were once subject, but they have not mingled with the rest of the populace.

Proudhon contrasted the peasant and the townsman: the peasant's estate is freehold; the townsman's is held in fief. "As in the past, the soul of the peasant is concerned with freehold ownership. Instinctively, he loathes the town dwellers, the men of corporations, magistrates and lawyers, in the same way that he loathed the lord of the manor, the man with feudal rights. His great preoccupation is, in the old legal terms he has not forgotten, to expel the alien (*expulser le forain*). He would like to be the sole ruler of the earth and so become master of the towns and dictate the law to them."<sup>1</sup>

Their attachment to the land, to the *pays* (which gives them their name in France) seems to be the mainspring of their lives, accounting for the fact that they never want to leave the particular spot where they were born and took root, and where their family has lived for what seems to them an immeasurable time. Yet the term "peasant" is rather a general one; in reality it covers several concepts which should be distinguished from one another.

A French sociologist, Maunier, has studied both groups made up of kinsfolk and those formed by people living together in the same place, which seem to him to represent the old kinds of communal living, and which are indeed still vitally and firmly rooted in country districts. Among rural populations the characteristic group does appear to be the family; there it is at its most extensive, and country people are more keenly aware than anyone else of their kin and of the relationships through children, cousins and marriage ties binding them to each other. But we shall see that this intensity of feeling is probably a result of the general conditions prevailing in peasant life.<sup>2</sup>

Still with the country in mind, the common characteristic of groups of peasants who are neighbours or live near to one

<sup>1</sup> *La Capacité politique des classes ouvrières*, one of Proudhon's last published works, p. 18. (*Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bouglé and Moysset, annotated by Maxime Leroy, p. 67.)

<sup>2</sup> *Essais sur les groupements sociaux*, Paris, 1929.



another is obvious enough; simply the fact they do dwell and remain together in the same place. The members of such a group live on a piece of earth, and amid landscapes which in a sense are part of them and of their group. Here again we find that which is the basis of the importance attached to two other determinants: devotion to the family and, in a village for example, to the neighbouring families. The most important factor here is always the land, the soil.

Indeed, when an industrial worker who has left the country a good while ago thinks of his birthplace he feels much the same as the emigrant in the United States who has made himself a position in the new country, thinking half proudly, half scornfully and pitifully of the old world, where, to tell the truth, he knew nothing but poverty, but which he is none the less not prepared to condemn wholly. The urban worker chaffs and pities the countryman because he seems behind the times and out of the swim of things, stuck in a backwater with old ways of doing things, incapable of using new methods and modern, time and trouble-saving apparatus. In this respect the workers consider themselves more up to date than the peasants and in closer contact with the higher manifestations of the technical and economic life of the times.

But the peasant does not think of farm labouring as an inferior pursuit, since agriculture comes up against difficulties that never occur in industry. For reasons not dependent on man but on the earth and its fruits, work cannot be cut down or production accelerated to the same extent. Industry is always operating upon inert material, whereas every branch and subdivision of agricultural production works with animals and vegetables, with organic beings. Now the organic, hitherto at any rate, has always differed from the inorganic in that man has not been able to modify it to any great extent.<sup>1</sup>

To be exact, the earth worked by the peasant is not soil in its primitive state. The areas best lending themselves to cultivation had to be selected; clearing, draining, irrigation, digging, dressing and manuring had to be carried out; the rotation of crops giving the best results to be discovered. And

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *op. cit.*, p. 336.



the peasant, like the urban worker, makes good use of tools and machines. To date they have not revolutionized the technical aspects of the work; but we know that in the United States, for example, they have saved a great deal of work. But perhaps the nearest thing to mechanization in agriculture is the increasingly rational distribution and working of the earth so as to discover which plants and animals are best adapted to the nature of the soil and other natural conditions.<sup>1</sup>

That being so, man must still be content to wait, once the sowing is done, for the seed under the surface to germinate, the plant to ear or bear fruit, as the natural seasonal forces of heat, rain, and so on work on it. Here man cannot replace nature or share her labours to the same extent as in industry. This applies equally to cattle breeding, poultry farming, etc. Even if we could double, triple, quadruple or even quintuple the yield by using fertilizers, sowing, reaping and threshing machines and all modern means of motor transport, we should still be far behind the increase in output and the saving in manpower that have come about in industry during the last fifty years; here the old results need to be multiplied by ten, a hundred, a thousand or more. Beasts and plants cannot be forced like inanimate things.

Agricultural techniques, then, are much what they are bound to be given the nature of what they are dealing with and producing. If the peasant seems to follow routine it is because he feels, rightly enough, that better techniques than the old ones have yet to be discovered in this field. These methods must be judged by country standards and not town ones, which are very different. Many trades and industries could be made to appear equally out of date; but the workers employed in them do not feel inferior to others. In much the same way, the peasants do not consider themselves inferior to the town workers.

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But, on the other hand, even when an emigrant participates in a civilization he thinks superior—because more complex and rapidly changing—he still dreams sometimes of what he misses

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie, recherches sur la hiérarchie des besoins dans les sociétés industrielles contemporaines*, Paris, 1913, p. 17.

from the old days; traditions of long standing that made him feel independent of the outside world, surroundings in which he was among equals to the extent that they all belonged to the same country, spoke the same language and lived in the same moral atmosphere. There is a similar basic difference between the urban worker and the peasant: the one is paid to work for an employer, neither owning his tools nor having any rights over the product; while the other, in France at any rate, whether he is a small landowner or a tenant-farmer, is responsible for his own working conditions, disposes of his crop or product as he thinks fit and is his own master or enjoys a great deal of independence.

To judge why peasants are so attached to the land we may as well consider the country which has by far the highest number of agricultural workers as representative of their condition. What do the relevant French statistics tell us?

Simiand distinguished between those in agriculture whose condition is closer to that of workers and those who are more like employers. In the first category he placed agricultural servants (who differ from factory workers in that they are often hired for a year and live in the home of their employer) and also what are called day-labourers, who, in contrast to factory workers, are often property owners at the same time.

Even when it is stretched in this way the category of workers makes up quite a moderate proportion of the total active (male) agricultural populace between 1851 and 1921—between 30 and 45 per cent—compared with the present-day 78 per cent for the salariat and workers in industry applying to the corresponding active male population.<sup>1</sup>

But not all these agricultural workers retain the same status throughout their lives. Those who never rise from being workers make up only 10 to 20 per cent of the whole (whereas it is 40 to 60 per cent in industry); hence the agricultural workers who will never become independent property owners are very few, less than 15 per cent of the whole class.

Of course, there are many tenant-farmers and a smaller number of smallholders beside the property owners. The

<sup>1</sup> *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year (1928-29), p. 449.

tenant-farmer and the smallholder do not strictly possess the land they cultivate. They are dependent on the landlord in that they have to pay him fixed sums at regular intervals, and carry out maintenance work and improvements. But the leases are long and are usually renewed. As a rule the landlord lives at a distance and does not supervise the peasant in the way the directors and foreman watch over the factory worker; the peasant is the occupant of the land and cultivates what he pleases as he likes. And since his gain consists of what does not go to the landlord, since everything produced is the result of his own labour and his own portion is the most indeterminate and variable, he very easily comes to think that he is working on his own account and that the rent is a sort of tax on his produce, like some old-fashioned tithe or twentieth part. Thus tenant-farmers and smallholders seem very much like landowners in fact, if not legally, and behave as such.

The preponderance of the small landowning peasant in France is a remarkable thing. According to Truchy, half the farms have no hired help at all.<sup>1</sup> They are farms which require no one but the family of the owner or tenant-farmer or smallholder to work them. And even those that do make use of hired help average only two labourers per farm.

The very nature of agricultural production ensures that there are not many large farms worked by a body of labourers under a bailiff; for this type of work does not lend itself to mechanical methods and the division of labour as industrial operations do. In factories, the fact that the worker is a link in a chain controlled by the rhythms of machines forces him to use the same effort and maintain the same speed constantly. Also, the whole problem of production down to every detail can be foreseen and planned in advance. Regulation and inspection are separate functions the worker has no concern with. In agriculture it is the labourer himself who has to decide when to do each job and at what speed to work. He has to take into account the time of year and many unforeseeable natural conditions. On him alone depends the quality of his endeavours. He must always be thinking of his fields and

<sup>1</sup> *Cours d'économie politique*, Vol. I, p. 256.

his livestock; in a sense he has to identify himself with and become a part of his farm. He will achieve this state of mind only if he is fully engaged in his work; that is, if he is the owner of his land, or thinks of himself as such.

The English traveller, Arthur Young, noticing in France many years ago that "an air of neatness, warmth and comfort breathes over the whole. It is visible in their new-built houses and stables; in their little gardens; in their hedges; in the courts before their doors; even in the coops for their poultry and the sties for their hogs," concluded: "Property in land is, of all others, the most active instigator to severe and incessant labour. And this truth is of such force and extent, that I know of no way so sure of carrying tillage to a mountain top as by permitting the adjoining peasants to acquire it in property."

Could this love of the land possibly be a sort of trick played by nature on the peasant? There are certainly big differences between the wealth of the inhabitants and the produce of the soil in the various regions. In the fertile countryside of Normandy, the Beauce, Anjou, Poitou, the northern plains, Picardy and the whole valley of the Seine, the earth rewards man's toil richly. But in other parts much hard work produces but a meagre result. In several regions the peasant still reminds us of those fierce animals La Bruyère speaks of, black, livid, burnt by the sun, attached to the earth they scratch and stir with an invincible obstinacy, living on water, black bread and roots, creeping at night into lairs, and with faces scarcely human. This figure appears again, with his physical and moral squalor, his incessant and ill-rewarded work, in the dry notes of a writer like Jules Renard.

It is nevertheless true that peasants do become attached even to poor, dry and dismal regions, perhaps for the very reason that they are difficult to live in: the mountain peoples, for example, or the Bretons. Vidal de la Blache says: "The landscape, the woods, the fields and the empty spaces become part of an inseparable whole whose image men carry away with them."<sup>1</sup> The Bretons, isolated in their farms lost

<sup>1</sup> *Tableau de la géographie de la France*, in *Histoire de la France depuis les origines jusqu'à la Révolution*, by Ernest Lavisse, Vol. I, Part I, Paris, 1903.

among muddy paths under the trees, do not evince the slightest desire to go and seek more fertile fields elsewhere.

So it is a complex feeling that keeps the peasant in his native place whether he lives well off the land or whether he can barely keep alive in spite of exhausting labours. Besides, even in a rich land the peasant knows that he depends on the state of the market and the fluctuations in prices, which are often fixed many miles away in other continents, and seem to him as capricious and arbitrary as stormy weather.

Nevertheless, during a depression or a period of falling values the peasant does manage to eke out a living; for, unlike industrial work, the cultivation of the soil always keeps the labourer supplied with food; without any intermediary or expense he can grow enough wheat and potatoes to sustain himself. At such times the country people recover their independence; they are no longer dependent on the market and do not have to pay workpeople and shopkeepers. They have arrived back at a direct domestic economy, involving no exchange—a natural economy. To be able to return to this when any exchange would mean loss is a supreme guarantee and a precious safeguard, and it is not surprising that they are sensible of the advantages of such security; it is indeed perhaps their chief reason for loving the land and remaining grouped together upon it. It has fed them; it may treat them cruelly; but it will not forsake them.

This is the basis of the peasant's attachment to the soil. The American farmers Simiand describes have taken up a very different attitude during the whole of the nineteenth century and right up to the present day. Writing of the period between 1790 and 1820, he says they are not like European peasants, who tend to be hard working, prudent and economical, but are speculative farmers who believe that the value of the soil should constantly increase.<sup>1</sup> To them it is the best form of saving or investment. They get into debt to buy land. They buy what they need by means of advances to which the seller agrees on the strength of the sale of the harvest; eventually there is a carrying forward and

<sup>1</sup> *Inflation et Stabilisation alternées: le développement économique des Etats-Unis (des origines coloniales au temps présent)*, Paris, 1934.



a new loan. So the soil is treated like another object of barter. They want to own it and seek it out greedily, but in the manner of those who, in heroic times, quarrelled over sites in their search for gold, or of those who later struggled to acquire securities and transferable preference stocks of rising value. They will resell as soon as the sale is to their advantage. Often they do not cultivate the land themselves, but live at a distance and know nothing but what they learn from their agents about it. Given a good offer, they will quickly abandon farming, forget about agriculture and take up industry, commerce or estate agency; and, like Babbitt, they will want to return to the country only for entertainment and sport.

In the European countries, on the other hand, the peasants do not put a value on the earth apart from its worth to them, a value which is only temporarily in their hands. Their attitude is the reverse of this. Of course, there are property dealers here who speculate in land, but for the most part they are not peasants. The whole life and thought of the peasant is inextricably bound up with the soil, and this in turn accounts for other determinants and collective emotions; for example, the bond with the house itself, which is probably the basis of the peasant family's unity. Town dwellers pick both their residence and its position with due regard to comfort, accessibility, district—whether in a quiet or bustling, working-class or wealthy neighbourhood—while a villager's house is above all else the centre of his land.<sup>1</sup> It must be close to where he works, his lots of land or the fields he owns. Usually the villagers' houses belong to them; they have been handed down from father to son and recall times and events in which people are always closely associated with their environment. By its size and general appearance each house represents the extent and value of its master's property; the peasant is proud to own a large, imposing and comparatively luxurious one because he thinks of it as the home of a rich family, bound up with all its wealth.

Not only is the position of the peasant's house determined by that of his property, but its interior arrangements depend

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc. (*op. cit.*), pp. 40 and 73.



on the habitual pursuits of the owner. Here is another factor differentiating country from town life. The home of an urban worker is almost always some distance from the factory where he works (or if they are close together it is fortuitous). It is most unusual to find the instruments and tools of his trade in his home. In the country, on the other hand, there is no clear division, as far as rooms, furniture and produce go, as to whether they are to do with the domestic or the professional side of life. The stable and the barn are often built as part of the house, and in any case the house is usually of lesser importance. The family eat and sleep close to the livestock and the sacks of grain. The poultry yard extends almost to the living rooms; we see this in many a peasant interior painted long ago by a Dutch master, and it is still often found in village life. The daily round of labour is the dominant note of every aspect of rural existence.

Consequently the peasant family has a wider membership and a stronger sense of solidarity than the urban. And indeed in town the whole sector of life that is given over to earning a living is carried on outside the family circle, in the workshop, the bank, the office. This was not so in the past. Before they allowed themselves to be shut up in business or work places, shops, offices and factories, those who later became the clerical workers in business and the factory hands in industry spent as much time as possible in their shops and stalls and home workrooms, with the family close at hand and a patriarchal relationship between master and man. The traditions of the trade were not confined to the technical side of working life. All family occasions, celebrations with neighbours and friends, weddings and funerals, were marked by them. Nowadays the two spheres of working and family life are dissociated. It is not only that the places of work are separate and usually at a distance from the houses that form the physical background of domestic life, but the periods of time devoted to these two parts of existence are strictly divided and do not encroach on each other. The family to-day has no connexion with the workroom and the shop, but has to be self-sufficient and is therefore often more fragile and less stable than in the past.

In the country, on the other hand, work is accomplished within the framework of the family group, in the fields and meadows belonging to it, often in the immediate vicinity of the house. When two peasants meet and exchange ideas and news, or when they are united or opposed by different emotions, the two orders of interest come together and mingle, even when the two men are not related since the village is in a sense an enlarged family.

The life of the peasant group is deeply and wholly concerned with nature, which gives it a particular pungency and harshness, more spontaneity, primitive bursts of energy, and even a savage quality. But it is weighed down by the heaviness of the earth, and follows the slow rhythm of country labours. It is a collective life at once very robust and very simple or simplified. The country customs take their strength both from the strong sense of kinship and from the communal pursuits; from these they derive their stability and continuity.

For this very reason it is rather difficult to tell how much the peasants are influenced by the two great collective forces: the family, and religion. They seem to have retained their pristine state here more than elsewhere; but the main reason for this is quite possibly the way in which habits in general are kept up in the country. Periodic religious ceremonies provide an occasion for the peasants to meet, but frequently the men remain at the church porch or in the market square on Sundays. Religious customs, like others, seem to appeal to them mostly because they are traditional, because they are part of a way of life that has been theirs for a long time; it has been preserved because the little village communities have turned in on themselves and have largely escaped the effects of currents of thought and belief, and collective habits formed and developed in the towns.

There is a difference between the peasant's devotion to the soil itself, which makes him take an interest in the fields and methods of cultivation when he is outside his own village on a short or distant train journey, and his ties with his own part of the country. In fact their communities are readymade, their houses being clustered together. These clusters vary in their density, however; Vidal de la Blache said the West of

France was occupied by peasants and the East by villagers.<sup>1</sup> In the West farms are scattered amongst smallholdings and pastures, ponds and pools, isolated one from another; the people meet only on public holidays and at the big markets, living apart during the long rainy seasons. In the East, on the other hand, in Lorraine, Burgundy, Champagne and Picardy, the rural population is gathered round the village church. However limited its horizon, however feebly the currents of the outside world reach it, the village makes up a little society open to general influences. But this agglomeration, generally a result of the way in which the land is parcelled out or the scarcity of water, is not an organized one. The houses may be close together, but the inhabitants are separate in their interests and preoccupations, which are not concerned with the same pieces of the land and are rarely corporate.

Of course, the peasants gather together for evenings during the winter, and again on holidays and market days. They work together at harvest time and during the vintage; but for the rest of the year the families live quite separately. Nobody considers anything but himself or his own kin. Just as a village sometimes ignores, envies and detests a neighbouring village, so it happens only too often that families envy each other from one house to the next, without ever a thought of helping each other.

Sourness, egoism and individualism are found at every social level. These people are thrifty and live sparsely. They are keen to extend their land. But they do not worry about their fellows. There is no natural tendency, even amongst the members of the same village or the same district, to work together for the common good.

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But the picture can be exaggerated; though this is the natural tendency, a remarkable change has come about during the last ten years, one which is accounted for not only by the increasing contacts with towns of all sizes, the schools, the newspapers, conscription, the advance in means of transport,

<sup>1</sup> *Tableau de la géographie de la France, op. cit.*

cars, etc. Economic reasons have intervened as a result of the very needs of agricultural production where it has been developed.

The pattern of the medium-sized and small peasant farm, of the little estate, has lasted in France (as in other countries) because it is well adapted to the conditions of agricultural production. But it came up against limitations and difficulties when its sales had to reach a fairly widespread market and where some specialized products were concerned. The peasant then had to attend to the commercial side of farming, and borrow money on security, which was beyond the means and possibilities of an individual farmer. This led to the substantial development of co-operation in agriculture in certain regions and for certain products; the peasants have succeeded in organizing themselves and working together; this incentive to social activity has proved very efficacious.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, there are some very old associations which are marketing co-operatives: the *fruitières* of the Jura. They make a cheese called *gruyère* which, for its size, needs more milk than a single peasant can produce and which also forces the producers to reach a market wider than each one could command on his own. The village associations are the result of this; perhaps they are the descendants of the old pastoral associations, which have passed through several stages. First of all, in the golden age, the associated farms each in turn did the work for all the others; then they employed a specialist, a cheesemaker, who visited the various farms to carry out the common process; finally one building was chosen, special equipment installed, and the product turned out by an employee of the group. In many cases the peasants associate themselves only to pool the milk and sell it for all the farms, and the cheesemaker is an independent manufacturer or trader. What the co-operative organization is mainly concerned with, in fact, is the business operation involved in disposing of the produce of each farm.

The same thing applies to the butter co-operatives. One peasant does not get enough milk to make it worth his while

<sup>1</sup> François Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1930-31, p. 672.

to churn butter every day. He would make less butter, of inferior quality; he cannot bring down his price or avail himself of the methods of production which are within the means of a large-scale cattle farmer, or make use of by-products (whey for fattening pigs, dried cheese, casein) made from what is left over. So that in this field the small farmer would have been cut out of the market by the big producer if he had not taken to associating himself with others. In the first stage, the association collects the milk, fixes its price, and an independent business man makes it into butter and sells it at his own risk. In the second stage it is the co-operative that manufactures the butter, turns it into a product of standard quality, finds regular markets, establishes its trade name and makes it known.

There are very interesting examples of agricultural marketing co-operatives outside France: in Denmark, which developed its export trade in agricultural produce in this way, and, through the high quality of its goods, leads in the English market; and in Ireland, at a later date—where people were much slower to abandon individual methods. Before World War I the co-operatives of Siberia were cited as successful ventures of this kind, along with those of many other countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Czechoslovakia, etc., both before and since the war.

It is noticeable that co-operatives have been forced, in order to obtain produce of high quality, to attend to the manner of raising, feeding and bedding cattle, selective breeding, the choice of dairy cows and other animals used, and they have even instituted inspections of byres. In this way they have exerted some influence on the methods of the producers. But so far agricultural co-operation goes no further than this; it does not extend to the collectivization of the peasant farms, which have remained separate and independent.

The same thing has come about in wine co-operatives, established among the vine-growing landowners, who were accustomed to, and preferred, individual production and individual sales with all their hazards: notably the chance of good prices and high profits. Selling associations are the result of the very increase in vine growing, the experience of



several years of bad sales, and the need to reach urban clients in particular. These associations, like others, have affected the product so as to make it fulfil the demands of the consumers who ask for "the same wine" (a mixture of various natural wines) every year. They have reached even a higher integration. The vine growers bring their crop of grapes to the co-operative, which itself makes the wine. In this way co-operative wine storing has come about. But although co-operation covers all the industrial parts of the process, in this trade as in others its spirit does not extend to the essentially agricultural operations, which are still carried on within the system of independent farms.

Other examples could be given: the great co-operative "elevators" in Canadian wheat production which have come near to taking the form of cartels or pools; or again, in fruit and meat production, etc. Selling co-operatives seem in one way or another to be forced on the peasants always by commercial requirements—above all, the need to reach a wide market and to bring about a regular and fixed consumer demand through the constant quality of the products. Co-operation has even made them improve their methods. But it has gone no further than this; it has not been able to integrate their farms. In other words, the peasants by associating have used all the means available to them to better the conditions of business as far as selling their goods goes; but they have not thereby ceased to be small landowners.

The same thing goes for the buying of raw materials and the means of production. For a long time agriculture has to a great extent been able to supply its own raw materials and make its own tools. But the need to buy apparatus (tools and machines) increases as these are perfected; seed, manure and fertilizers, etc., have to be bought. Here the small, isolated farmer is in an inferior position in spite of his co-operatives; he lacks knowledge and the means of judging where and how to buy in the best market conditions, where the nature of the goods, their price and quality are concerned; finally, he has difficulty in paying and in getting credit. At this juncture association has come about, in France in the form of agricultural syndicates, in other forms in other countries. A



limited collective organization is adopted by these means when important and costly apparatus is needed, such as a threshing machine, which cannot be used by all the members at the same time, or again the provision of electricity.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the co-operative associations for credit first appeared in the Central and Eastern European countries, that is, in the poorest and least developed agricultural countries, and they in any case were the result of outside philanthropic or State intervention (the Raiffeisen and Schultze-Delitzsch banks). The credit system in agriculture has spread only quite recently in France; the results are considerable, but all the same they do not equal the mass of loan and repayment among agriculturalists. Whenever they can the peasants avoid making use of official institutions in this sphere; another sign of their continued attachment to the traditional customs of credit and loan bound up with the system of independent cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

For some time, then, the peasant class has undoubtedly tended to make use of some forms of co-operative, syndical and associative organizations, but only in so far as they do not encroach on independent ownership and autonomous cultivation.

Of course, there have been periods lasting for several centuries during which the agricultural districts have been dominated by the community spirit. Marc Bloch has shown that the arrangement of the fields in long strips and the way in which the pieces of land were distributed is accounted for by collectively organized farming which gave way only very slowly to the system of independent farming.<sup>3</sup> But nowadays the peasant's chief characteristic, in Europe at any rate, is his attachment to the soil and his will to maintain and increase his private wealth and property.

We have pointed out that this is not only because the agricultural work must be stimulated by the feeling that the labourer is fully responsible for his own work and that his

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 680.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 681.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, Paris, 1934. See, too, *Note sur la notion de civilisation agraire* by Jules Sion, in *Annales sociologiques*, Series E, Section 2, 1937.

yield affects his gain. In addition to this, plants and animals, unlike the raw materials and products of industry, cannot be moved about and their development cannot be guided and inspected from anywhere but where they grow and feed. They have to be distributed and settled on the soil. For this reason the peasants are attached not only to the earth but to everything that belongs with it, to the house that is at once their dwelling place and the centre of their land, to the village, and above all to the way of life which is found on it, closely tied to the richness of the soil and the nature of its products, to the customs and traditions that express and reinforce the stability of the peasant group.

This scene is not inaccessible to some general influences from outside through the schools, newspapers, new means of transport, the wireless, etc. In addition, as agricultural production is increasingly in touch with the demands of townspeople it becomes industrialized and commercialized; some aspects of rural activities lend themselves to organization and through these a spirit of mutual help and co-operation penetrates bit by bit into the whole group.

But individualism survives in every aspect of life and activity which leaves men in contact with the earth; that is, in real farm labour and the type of peasant existence adapted to it. A whole area of social behaviour is explained by a pre-occupation with maintaining position and status and even rising in the social scale. But it is above all the feeling of being peasants, distinct from townsfolk, and the surviving opposition between two kinds of civilization that accounts for the particular determinants governing their lives.

### CHAPTER III

## Urban Environment and Industrial Civilization

### Part I

#### THE ENTREPRENEURS AND THE BOURGEOISIE

THE most complex forms of social life are found in towns, especially large towns. And there is one section of the population that determines the direction of the general activity and its principal objects in view.<sup>1</sup> It is the highest and richest class, the one that fulfils the most important functions. It can be called the *ruling* class not only because it possesses the most material, political and economic power, but also because of its way of thinking, which influences the lower classes and is copied by them. We shall begin by inspecting the main determinants of behaviour in bourgeois circles.

The word *bourgeois* means, etymologically, one who lives in a town (*un bourg*). The bourgeoisie springs from the towns—quite small ones compared with to-day's cities—of the *ancien régime*, the corporate system. For us to understand this class and its history, we must start by getting some idea of the collective mentality of bourgeois and small manufacturers' circles in the past.

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The chief determinant in bourgeois life under the *ancien régime* was undoubtedly a preoccupation with security. To begin with, material security. The bourgeois is peaceable. He contrasts with the nobleman as the civil force with the military. But he knows how to arm and protect himself with fortifications. He needs peace, and as H. Pirenne has pointed out,

<sup>1</sup> (See in *Villes et Campagnes*, *op. cit.*, p. 9, the graph showing the proportion of the urban population to the total population, from 1846 to 1946.—Editor.)

trade could not have developed unless the merchants and craftsmen had been protected against exploitation by the aristocracy and from the attacks of plunderers and armed bands; and those living by the sea and engaged in maritime trade, against pirates.<sup>1</sup>

It was economic security above all that they were concerned with. According to Adam Smith, the statutes and regulations of corporate towns always tended to their providing themselves with the means of acquiring the products of a maximum quantity of rural labour for a minimum quantity of their own work. The fixing of prices and salaries paid for goods made in the towns usually worked in such a way that the bourgeois could get in exchange not only the agricultural produce that enabled him to live, but also a profit that allowed him to be better dressed and housed than the peasant, and in addition to command a number of advantages to which the latter could not pretend.<sup>2</sup>

But as Sombart has demonstrated, what the bourgeois were chiefly concerned with was not to better themselves but to maintain themselves in the positions in which they found themselves.<sup>3</sup> Both craftsmen and merchants were used to a way of life established by custom and general opinion, and they considered that their trades should guarantee it for them; nothing less, but, on the other hand, nothing more was expected.

This is the reason for their devotion to traditional methods and their reluctance to change them. They wanted the work to be well done and to show the craftsman's touch, for only thus were they sure of keeping their custom. Each of them, in fact, had his circle of clients, and the statutes fixed the number of masters, journeymen and apprentices so that each craftsman and merchant could count on enough customers. There was neither innovation nor competition. They did not

<sup>1</sup> *Les Villes au moyen âge*, Paris, 1932. H. Pirenne shows in particular how, as long as the Mediterranean was closed to European ships, that is, from the Moham-medan conquest until the Crusades, there was no real commerce inside Europe. It starts up again when the sea is liberated once more.

<sup>2</sup> *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776, Book I, Chapter X, Part 2: "Inequalities Occasioned by the Policy of Europe."

<sup>3</sup> *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, 2 vols; 1902.

try to build up business by lowering their profits or advertising, and for this reason there was a community spirit and atmosphere of mutual assistance within the group.

In other words, money profit, profit at all costs, and ever-increasing profit, was not their motive; they were content to earn their livings so as to maintain themselves at the same social level as their parents and neighbours. The teachings of the Church sanctioned both their statutes and their conduct. It condemned usury and tolerated business on the condition that it sold at just prices—prices which meant a reasonable profit to allow sellers to maintain their positions.

This picture is, of course, one of relatively ideal conditions in the distant past; and there were already some traders who were more adventurous than others, who would take a risk for the sake of profit. Sombart says, "There have always been small manufacturers who are not content with their 'keep,' who have extended their businesses and intensified their economic activity in order to increase their profits . . . men animated by their passion for money," even in medieval Europe. But, he adds, "they did not succeed in unsettling the spirit of the precapitalist economy in its essentials." According to him the proof of the extent to which a seeking after profit as such was alien to the people of those times is the fact that "all desire of gain, all greed looks for its satisfaction outside the sphere of production, transport, or even for the most part outside of trade. Men turned eagerly to the mines and searched for treasures, practised alchemy and other magic arts, for the very reason that they could not earn as much money as they wanted within the bounds of everyday economics."<sup>1</sup>

From this angle, in fact, the exceptions prove the rule. Every age has its exceptional characters, ruffians and swindlers, as Sombart says, and quacks (as many alchemists were) who made dupes of people, and also inventors (born too early, into a society hostile and prejudiced against any technical innovation in trade), gamblers and speculators. But considering together all the motives animating the majority of manufacturers and merchants of that time, it is obvious that the

<sup>1</sup> Werner Sombart, *Le Bourgeois, Contribution à l'histoire morale et intellectuelle de l'homme économique moderne*, French edition, Paris, 1926, p. 23.



spirit of enterprise and the pursuit of profit for its own sake were incompatible with the economic trends and administration of that epoch.

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So the historian gets a shock when he comes to consider what is usually called the capitalist economy, as it is found in full swing by the end of the eighteenth century and right up to the present day, to discover a completely different mentality in industrial and business circles. We shall now examine, one by one, the determinants governing their behaviour as they appear to be opposed to the preceding ones:

1. *Preoccupation with financial gain and with an unlimited increase in profits*

Aristotle believed that the acquisition of money in excess of natural requirements was incompatible with economic activity.<sup>1</sup> Monetary wealth, far from serving economic ends (i.e., ensuring what is necessary for survival), lends itself only to immoral and extra-economic uses. Every economy has its bounds and limits: the acquisition of money evades these. Of course, the love of gold or money, *auri sacra fames*, appears at every epoch. But in the past money was sought after only for the goods it could buy. The miser hoarding for the sake of hoarding, starving to death on a heap of gold, has always been an exception: his passion is a kind of madness. In a society where money can be acquired only by working at some trade, where in addition to this both statutes and tradition settle the amount of money thus to be earned according to the requirements of life at one's social level, and where money can be spent only on consumer goods, people work to earn a living and do not want money for its own sake.

The situation is different when money can be used to earn more money, when it brings in interest. There have always been moneylenders of course, but they loaned to people who wanted money to spend on consumer goods, to prodigals or gamblers. The moneylender's trade, however, was a trade like any other, the profits being limited by the laws against

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I.



usury; and in fact it was followed only by those who had no other. The innovation that characterizes the capitalist system is the loan to production, the advance to finance a productive undertaking.

The moment this happens people start seeking in money the capacity to make more money. And once such a desire is conceived it can only increase indefinitely. Indeed, it is hard to see where its limits could lie. Money that is wanted for the consumer goods it procures disappears into the goods, in their consumption. As for the desire for goods, it disappears as soon as it is satisfied, and if it reappears later it is with the same strength as before, for the very reason that there is no money left to satisfy it. But money that is put out to make more money does not, in the first place, disappear, but increases. It is put out again, with its interest added to it, for the same reason for which it was originally put out—and the reason has not disappeared either. To put it in other terms: no limits can be set, since what was first sought after was not a concrete thing, a definite fulfilment, but the possession of something wanted because it exists only to increase, because its nature and *raison d'être* is ever to grow.

Once money has acquired this capacity, it becomes its prime characteristic. Henceforth everything is valued in terms of money, goods, services, even time itself. In the past people valued things for their own sake. Their monetary value was in question only when they were to be exchanged with others, which was but seldom, for people were mostly concerned with goods. Nowadays goods are merely the form in which money is presented, for the seller only acquires them in order to make more money (and not to obtain other goods), to produce interest on the money he already has. All economic and even social life is dominated by financial considerations. When people eat, or when they dress luxuriously, they say to themselves: If I had spent less on my food or on my clothes, and set aside the corresponding sum, I should have been able to pay it as interest on such and such capital which, well placed, would have brought me in more.

As Franklin said: "Remember, that time is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes

abroad, or sits idle one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides,"<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere: "For six pounds a year you may have the use of one hundred pounds, provided you are a man of known prudence and honesty. He that spends a groat a day idly, spends idly above six pounds a year, which is the price for the use of one hundred pounds. He that wastes idly a groat's worth of his time per day, one day with another, wastes the privilege of using one hundred pounds each day."<sup>2</sup> In this way man is subordinated to profits instead of profits to the satisfaction of man. To grow richer, not to have more goods, which will be consumed, but to have the means of becoming even richer: this is the new creed, a categorical imperative underlying capitalist morality.

## 2. *The Entrepreneurial Spirit*

Under the *ancien régime* there was hostility to any innovation in the sphere of production or commerce. Of course, new activities had come about, outside the domain of the corporations, tending to the spatial extension of economic relations, and greater ease in paying through banks and on credit. But the old system was not affected by these initiatives, which remained outside and almost unknown to it.

In the modern system, on the other hand, the spirit of extension, renewal and transformation works from within. One of the most vigorous economic theorists of to-day, Schumpeter, has explained how societies have passed from what he calls the static system, where production and consumption are regulated by tradition and each cycle exactly repeats the preceding one, to the dynamic system which, conversely, stands for change and progress.<sup>3</sup> This has come

<sup>1</sup> *Advice to a Young Tradesman*, 1748, *Complete Works*, edited by Sparks, Vol. II, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich*, 1736, *ibid.* Max Weber quotes both these passages in his essay, mentioned below.

<sup>3</sup> *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*, Leipzig, 1912. French edition: *Théorie de l'évolution économique, recherches sur le profit, le crédit, l'intérêt et le cycle de la Conjoncture*, with an introduction by François Perroux. See our reports: *Année sociologique*, Vol. XII, 1913, p. 574, and *Annales sociologiques*, series D, Section 2, 1937, p. 126.

about through the appearance of men of strong personality, carrying their rules of conduct within themselves and not deriving them from their environment; they are men quick to appreciate the joy of creating something. Their part is essentially to invent new schemes which will increase profits. They are the entrepreneurs of our times. The entrepreneur is assisted by the banker, who advances capital to him by means of credit. Occasionally the two capacities are united in the same person.

The old-fashioned manufacturer was not concerned with perfecting his technique and increasing his profits. In his trade he stuck to traditional rules which were proven good because they guaranteed the high quality of the product. The situation is quite different when action must be taken to raise the selling price higher and higher above the cost price, or to make this fall lower and lower beneath the selling price. It is then absolutely essential to introduce new methods into industry and commerce.

The entrepreneur forges ahead, taking no notice of traditions, turning his back on them. He is never satisfied with what exists, with the mere repetition and continuation of previous practice. Of course all innovation contains an element of risk; but he is after increased profits, not security. The entrepreneur is always nervous, agitated, feverish, on the look out for new inventions, schemes which have not yet been tried out. And for him this state of mind is not exceptional and temporary. He is not usually given credit for his inventiveness. Once he has embarked on this path he must go on; capital is increased and sufficient profits made to augment it only if the procedures of manufacture and sale are improved. A first success is an incentive to seek for more. Otherwise, why start?

It is not only in the technical sphere that this spirit of constant transformation is found, but also in the economic, commercial and financial organization of the enterprise, in the relations with workers and clients. The entrepreneur thinks he must get the maximum pecuniary profit out of each of these elements, and can do this only if he never relaxes in his drive forward and is always seeking simplifications and

developments that he will be the first to have thought of and make profitable. So he is constantly straining, without a moment's respite, perpetually making demands on all his resources, using up his will-power and energy in a way that contrasts with the regular, serene and unfeverish activity of the past.

The entrepreneurial spirit is supremely rational—the word is particularly applicable: rationalization, recurring so often in recent economic literature, best expresses the fundamental tendencies of the modern system of production: in the first place, in its opposition to custom, tradition, instinct and habit, the natural inertia of men who fear novelty because it demands of them a more or less painful effort of adaptation; secondly, modern organization tends to render work, actions, ways of life and spending and consumption habits uniform, whereas human nature varies greatly according to individuals and groups; finally, the entrepreneurial spirit derives inspiration from measurement and calculation, and amidst economic realities seeks out whatever lends itself to precision and organization. It tends increasingly to eliminate relations between directors and workers, sellers and buyers, which in turn undermines individual taste and free choice. It affects all the instincts that respond to variation in place and time, family ties and relations with friends and neighbours, tending to bring uniformity into every sphere of life: that of labour as well as the satisfaction of needs. Scientifically organized factories, standardized needs; accountancy, administration, bureaucracy: such are the latest key-words of what is called economic progress.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *Competition and business warfare*

The capitalist system offered to the world the principle of complete economic liberty: liberty for each man to work at any trade he wished to and to extend his business as widely as he chose. Competition amongst tradesmen and manufacturers, whose numbers used to be limited by the statutes of

<sup>1</sup> On economic rationalism and bureaucratism, see Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Section III of *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, 1922; on rationalization and scientific methods in industry, see Sombart's *Das Wirtschaftsleben im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, 2 vols., 1928; French edition, *L'Apogée du capitalisme*, 1932.



the corporations, has become the rule in production and selling; the more so since big enterprises often produce a better output because of their size, their large capital and their more advanced division of labour.

Naturally, a large undertaking carries its own disadvantages and risks, and labours under special difficulties. This is why the contribution of small and medium-sized firms varies so much between different branches of industry, trades, districts and economic conditions (prosperity and depressions), sometimes on the increase, always of considerable importance. But amongst these too, and even amongst the very small artisans of our times, the struggle to keep going is sometimes even fiercer than amongst the large-scale firms. Under the modern regime every enterprise depends entirely on itself for survival; it must often launch attacks to defend itself, and since it is not protected it has to fight for its life all the time.

The watch-words of all the theoretical apologists for this system are *individualism* and *liberalism*: the one conceived of as a school of energy which ensures a happy selection by allowing the most gifted to triumph; the other, involving *laissez-faire* and no State intervention, carries its own redress, since the law of supply and demand restores the balance as soon as it is upset. These are battle conditions, and it is a war in which all means are fair if they make for success.

The stories of some of the pioneers of capitalism, such as Astor, make interesting reading. He made sure of his monopoly in the fur trade by means of armed battles with his rivals, selling alcohol to the Indians, and corrupting the Government; he armed his smuggling ships; and finally, speculated on sites in New York, taking advantage of the poverty and inexperience of many owners.<sup>1</sup> There are similar stories about oil and railway magnates, etc. The sources of most large fortunes are not very edifying, built up as they are by chance and the ruin of unlucky rivals: boldly, no doubt, but also frequently dishonestly. On the whole, the law of the jungle rules. An enterprise without sufficient financial backing,

<sup>1</sup> *John Jacob Astor: Businessman*, 2 vols., Cambridge (Mass.), 1931; see our study, *Un grand marchand d'Amérique: John Jacob Astor*, in *Annales d'Histoire économique et sociale*, 1933.



clever handling of publicity and advertising and knowledge of the schemes of its rivals is easily destroyed.

At all events, this keen competition is one of the essential factors in modern industry. The stark truth about commerce is that, of its very nature, it places buyer and seller in two enemy camps. This is not so true in small traditional societies ruled by custom, where buyers and sellers are at the same time members of local, family and religious groups which connect them personally. Here the harshness of purely commercial relations is attenuated and veiled. But in larger and more heterogeneous communities, where traditional ties have less force, the state of war declares itself again. Individuals and commercial and financial societies fight for clients just as nations compete in the conquest of new colonial markets. Hence the sternly realistic, even egotistical frame of mind of which entrepreneurs are often accused, and which is not always a reflection of their personal natures but a necessary reaction and weapon in the struggle for existence and for profits.

It is probably in the nature of things that the contemporary scene has witnessed a change in this respect during the last few decades: as the capitalist system extends and grows more complex, the big producers show an opposite tendency; they are forced to organize themselves, to give mutual guarantees, discipline themselves, agree to frontiers to their territories and make treaties and alliances.

So the entrepreneur is subject to new determinants: a sense of solidarity, an awareness of the general interest and of his social responsibility. But this marks the beginning of a new epoch, and the characteristics of past centuries, as we have outlined them, still hold all their significance.

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The capitalist system has undoubtedly reinforced the psychological bent we have been considering even if it is not wholly responsible for it. But to explain the breaking up of ancient habits and the new interests aroused, we must also take into account the influx of gold and silver into Europe during the sixteenth century, which followed the discovery of America. It is only natural that the precious metals, silver

and gold, should not have been sought after for their own sake, and not much accumulated at a time when they were very rare, scarcely sufficing for the needs of exchange. When there was an abundance of them, enabling industry and trade to expand rapidly, they became the most sought after of objects and stimulated men to great efforts. With money, wealth came to the towns; those who owned houses and building sites in them saw their value go up ;<sup>1</sup> the population increased; manufacturers and shopkeepers had more customers to satisfy, especially as new demands came about, and a taste for luxuries.<sup>2</sup> In this way men adapted themselves bit by bit to the new economic trends, in the same way that the tastes and preferences of those who leave the country for the town change, their thoughts and desires shaping themselves to new living conditions.

In fact, of course, the new spirit appeared at very varying intensities in different countries. France was in neighbourly contact with Spain, which all the American gold passed through, and large numbers of artisans worked for the Spaniards in Spain. Germany and Italy gained as much as any other countries from this influx of precious metals into Europe, but it was none the less in England, in its great commercial and manufacturing towns, that we first come across bourgeois determinants and characteristics later to be labelled capitalist. Industry began to advance at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and during the latter when England was still small in population and had formidable rivals in maritime trade and many other branches of commerce in Holland and the North European towns. During the eighteenth century the predominantly Anglo-Saxon groups that made up the colonies of North America (destined to become the United States) were influenced by this spirit and joined the *avant-garde* of the new system.

In good time the movement reached other countries, but with a delay, sometimes a considerable one; in France, the industrial revolution occurred only at the beginning of the

<sup>1</sup> Karl Bücher stresses this point in *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, Tübingen, 1893, 2nd ed., 1898, French ed., *Etudes d'histoire et d'économie politique*, Paris, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book III, Ch. IV.

nineteenth century, in Germany at its end; until the time of Louis-Philippe the French bourgeois adopted the entrepreneurial outlook very timidly, and feudal and corporate habits and the system of splitting up the land that prevailed under the *ancien régime* paralysed the economic activity of the countries beyond the Rhine for even longer. English industry, on the other hand, was in full swing by the end of the eighteenth century, with a start it has never lost. As for American traders and business men, they seem early to have taken to capitalism.

Some sociologists have suggested that it is because most of the people, or at any rate the leading manufacturers in these countries, are of Anglo-Saxon race, and that this is a breed more energetic and positive than others.<sup>1</sup> Its members have more inclination for the business of industry and trade, are without magical and religious beliefs, and apply their practical and scientific minds to the analysis of reality. According to this theory the capitalist would have distinguished himself from other men and outstripped them simply by perceiving more lucidly what was necessary to the running of an efficient enterprise. Efficiency engineers and what is called the scientific organization of factories are all in the line of such positive and tenacious activity.

But others have maintained that there is more than this behind the capitalist mentality. We must not forget that the main question was not the modification of the material techniques of industry, or the various procedures of commerce, or even the framework of manufacturing. This was brought about little by little over a long period. The nature and characteristics of manufacturers and merchants had to be changed first. A world of religious and moral beliefs and habits had to be opposed by other forces of the same kind if all these agents of production were to be turned in a new economic direction.

Certainly the object and force of economic activity cannot be changed unless man changes completely too, in that, for example, he comes to believe that he is allowed and even

<sup>1</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts*, New York, 1914, 2nd ed., 1918. See our article, *L'Instinct ouvrier dans l'art industriel* (*Revue philosophique*, March-April 1921, pp. 214-233).

instructed to do what was once forbidden by God, the Church, or morality; to cultivate an activity which does violence to his deep-seated practices and natural inclinations by an effort of the will and a conviction that he is doing his duty. So the change in economic determinants we are thinking of has to be explained by a change in moral and religious attitudes.

This is Max Weber's point of view.<sup>1</sup> According to him, the early appearance of large-scale industries and capitalism in England and North America is due to the early dominance in these countries of the moral doctrines of Protestant puritanism, which taught them to value work for its own sake. In this way capitalist activity had the same effect on the economic sphere as puritan activity on the religious sphere. The spirit spread from the generally Protestant circles of these countries on to others. Max Weber's contemporary study of professional statistics in countries with mixed denominations shows that the Protestants are in the highest proportion among owners of capital and entrepreneurs, industrial workers and the higher grades of technical and commercial staff. It is not that they are, or were, minorities, debarred from holding public office and so naturally inclined to turn to industry. The Catholics, who are in a minority in Germany, Holland and England, have never displayed any special aptitude for industry. The growth of the entrepreneurial spirit does seem to be fostered by the moral climate of Puritan circles.

Many enterprises that are capitalist in form, such as banks, large export businesses and retail shops, were run for a long time on traditional, not capitalist lines. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Florence was the scene of industrial developments that already bore the characteristics of capitalism although the current moral code objected to any pursuit of profits.

<sup>1</sup> *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. I. Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, Tübingen, 1920, pp. 17-236, republished 1927 (first published as an article in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozial politik*, 1904-5, and reproduced unchanged in form, but with many new notes of wide application. Not translated into French. We have analysed it at some length in our article, *Les origines puritaines du capitalisme* (*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, published by the theological faculty of the University of Strasbourg, March-April 1925, pp. 132-157.)



The textile industry was in this position until the middle of the nineteenth century, on the continent at any rate. It needed capital: the entrepreneurs and dealers can be defined in terms of capitalism when we consider the nature of the business, their accounting, etc. Yet most of them lived modest lives and worked quietly as the members of their classes had lived and worked in the past; they waited for the peasants to come and collect their orders, and sold their produce through middlemen.

The men who transformed these old methods were very different: they had to make full use of every moment of their time, expend all their energy, allow themselves no amusements and no more rest than was strictly necessary. They sought out the peasants, picked the ones they wanted and turned them into factory workers. They organized direct sales to retail shops, took pains with their customers and kept a close watch on their demands and tastes. Exceptional self-control and self-confidence were needed to win the peasants' confidence, surmount the various obstacles in their path—sometimes deliberately placed there—and above all, unflaggingly to sustain their efforts. The reserves of money at their disposal could not alone have formed these qualities. Rather, it was the qualities themselves that forced them to find the necessary funds for their uses. They were not speculators, unscrupulous adventurers or even simply rich men, but men of bourgeois mentality for whom life was a difficult duty and a perpetual struggle.

One may wonder, especially to-day, what the link is between such personal endowments and religious convictions; if you ask one of these men who devotes himself to working for profits why he does it, he will not answer that it is in the hope of going to heaven. His eyes are firmly fixed on this earth. A few may say they are working for the sake of their children and grandchildren, but for most of them business is a matter of necessity and work the mainspring of their lives. In fact the big capitalist entrepreneur is often uninterested in the pleasures and amusements that his fortune can provide. His chief object is to justify himself in his own eyes by the accomplishment of his duty.



This respect for industry as a profession and high estimate of the manufacturer's or merchant's work did not of course exist at the time when capitalism was born. The Church was beginning to modify its condemnation of usury and commerce in deference to the great bankers of the Italian towns; none the less, it ruled that all commercial activity involved dishonour (*turpitude*), and public opinion agreed. The merchants themselves revealed their anxiety posthumously: they left legacies to ecclesiastical establishments, and provisions for the restoration of money to those in debt to them through usury.

But if this spirit can only be accounted for by the capitalist forms of modern industry, why has hostility to profit-making continued in Florence which saw the growth of capitalist industries as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while the evangelist of capitalism, in the person of Benjamin Franklin, was born in the eighteenth century in Pennsylvania, where there were no great enterprises and scarcely any banks, but only artisans and small businesses? On the one hand, there is a soul without a body, on the other a body without a soul. But it is the soul that will run the body.

What, then, is the spirit of capitalism, and where are we to look for its origins? Sombart maintains that it is one with the spirit of rationalism, and it is true that capitalism replaces the sense of vocation and the traditional methods of work by rational calculation and reflective thought in every sphere. But there is no connexion between the methods of industrial production and what is commonly called rationalism. The latin countries are enlightened by the philosophy of Voltaire, but it is not in France and Italy that the industrial revolution started. And even if the methods of modern industry are rational, there is something quite irrational about the abnegation of men who devote themselves utterly to a lucrative profession not for love of gain or the useful goods money can procure for them, but out of a sense of duty.

According to Max Weber it is Protestantism, in fact the Reformation, which, if it did not create the capitalist spirit, stimulated and stamped it with its imprint. But not the Lutheran Reformation in Germany—Luther believed that each man should do his duty in the station to which it had

pleased God to call him, that he should be content with what is necessary to remaining alive and leave the pursuit of profits to the impious. Luther, the son of a peasant, was prejudiced like all peasants against usury. He would not allow that money could be valuable in itself, and believed that the greed that makes a man strive after more than he needs is symptomatic of his being outside the state of grace.

It is in Calvinism and the kindred sects that money-making acquires dignity and is connected with inner religious inspiration. But there is more to it even than this: the real rift between Lutherans and Catholics on the one hand, and Calvinists on the other, is caused by their different concepts of morality, i.e. of life on this earth and the best way of organizing and enjoying it.

The Calvinists go so far as to say that practical and professional life must be considered as a duty, perhaps the only duty, of greater importance than the passive contemplation of God. This explains the very marked contrast between the life and thought of the English and German peoples after the Reformation. England itself had been split internally, first between Cavaliers and Roundheads, later between the squires who preserved the tradition of "merry England" and the mercantile classes inheriting the puritan tradition, who divided their time between their Bibles and their counters. The somewhat vulgar, easy and unaffected behaviour of the Germans contrasts with the reserve of the Anglo-Saxons, whose very faces are less expressive; even their features seem less mobile, such is the stamp of the puritan way of life on body and soul.

A belief in work, in effort made for its own sake; a somewhat pharisaic pride among the rich who owe their wealth to their self-denial, thrift and unremitting activity; the conformity of those who consider themselves worthy to take their place with the élite of mankind whose work has been rewarded by wealth (and hence blessed by God): these are the characteristics of mercantile and puritan morality, the traditional bourgeois standards. How far this morality was shaped by the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, as though worldly success were the only sign of grace, distinguishing the elect

from the masses, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the masses, is not a matter for discussion here.

This theory has been objected to, with some justification, in that it does not sufficiently take into account the great economic movement that took place in Holland and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or the discoveries of that time (although it is possible, of course, that the ideas affected the material conditions). Another factor in the formation of the capitalist spirit was the political thought of the Renaissance: Machiavelli contributed to the breaking down of traditional moral restraints and the creation of an intellectual climate favourable to economic individualism as much as Calvin.

Although Tawney considered Max Weber's essay on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* "one of the most fruitful examinations of the relations between religion and social theory which has appeared" he nevertheless thought that Weber greatly over simplified Calvinism itself. It is a mistaken belief that "all English Puritans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries held much the same views of social duties and expediency . . . the Calvinists of the sixteenth century (including English Puritans) were believers in a rigorous discipline, and the individualism ascribed not unjustly to the Puritan movement in its later phases would have horrified them. . . . On the other hand there were within seventeenth-century Puritanism a variety of elements, which held widely different views as to social policy. As Cromwell discovered, there was no formula which would gather Puritan aristocrats and levellers, landowners and diggers, merchants and artisans . . . into the fold of one social theory."<sup>1</sup>

Tawney concluded that "what is true and valuable in Weber's essay is his insistence that the commercial classes in seventeenth-century England were the standard-bearers of a particular conception of social expediency, which was markedly different from that of the more conservative elements in society—the peasants, the craftsmen, and many landed gentry—and that the conception found expression in religion,

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, London, 1926.

in politics, and, not least, in social and economic conduct and policy."

Whatever the true case, it is in this anglo-saxon protestant climate, under influences in part religious, that a body of moral habits and beliefs originated which lasted long, and which have by no means disappeared. In spite of the demoralizing examples of fortunes made too quickly and easily, and what moralists call the corrupting action of wealth, there are still some rich men who account for their good and evil actions as exactly as for their expenditures and receipts, and who carry into their private lives the sense of duty developed in their professions.

In such circles, the motivating force is individualism, and we may well wonder how a society can be built up on such a basis. That the individual can be considered as the prime and absolute value, and that this belief, which would seem to be conducive to the most immoral egoism, can provide a morality, is only because it has by some means taken on a religious form. In fact Max Weber wrote of the vestiges he found, on his travels in America, of the old religious organizations; they are now partly secularized, i.e., replaced by clubs and exclusive societies which it is necessary to belong to before one can obtain a certain degree of consideration and credit. The sects of the past, made up only of pious men, and with a novitiate period, obliged their members to prove that they were amongst the elect through their rigorously supervised conduct; these were the forcing ground in which the ascetic qualities and individualistic spirit that are the very soul of capitalist organization took root and developed. "While the excessive enrichment of one member of a gild in the middle ages affected the corporative spirit adversely, the success of a capitalist 'brother' amongst Baptists or Quakers, as long as it followed legal channels, was a proof of grace and increased his sects' chances of success."<sup>1</sup>

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At all events, by the nineteenth century this new morality no longer relied on such support but existed in its own right.

<sup>1</sup> An article that appeared in 1906 that also appears in his *Religionssoziologie* (Vol. I, pp. 207-236), entitled *The Protestant Sects and the Capitalist Spirit*.



Even Catholic circles, hostile to Protestant individualism, were affected. Of course it met with some resistance; but the Catholic church, with its traditional opposition of rich and poor as evil and good—or at any rate, those more exposed to sin and those whose poverty preserves them from many forms of temptation—had to admit that the work of industrial leaders and business men could be quite blameless.

“It is a harder life, more painful and mortifying than that of the greatest servants of God in the cloister and the desert,” said Father Croiset in the middle of the eighteenth century, with the tormented existence of most business men in mind. Their lives are ascetic, and whatever their motive in renouncing the pleasures of worldly existence, the “wearisome and constant care” they impose on themselves, even the stubbornness with which they pursue their labours, should endow them with certain advantages in the eyes of the Faith over the idle and worldly; if only because they appear by their work to be following God’s decree and expiating that original sin the lazy pleasure-seeking man of the world seems bent on ignoring.<sup>1</sup>

And yet there is only one way of justifying riches and the efforts made to acquire them: the way of good works, almsgiving and charity. Capitalism can scarcely be ignored, and the church tolerates it as best it can, remaining nevertheless bound up with the old form of society which is basically hostile to capitalism.

Nietzsche remarks somewhere<sup>2</sup> that the foremost need of the religious life is a good deal of leisure. Most people in our feverish societies, taken up as they are with their laborious pursuits which have been destroying religious instincts for some time, do not know the purpose of religion but simply register its existence with surprise: “Taken up with business and pleasure, they have no time for it, especially as they are not sure whether it is itself a matter of business or pleasure.” In fact whatever influence it may still exert on tradesmen, manufacturers and business men, their actions and endeavours are not ordinarily

<sup>1</sup> B. Groethuysen, *Origine de l'esprit bourgeois en France. I. L'Eglise et la Bourgeoisie*, 1927, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 3. Hauptstück, 758.



motivated by religion. Our next enquiry must be, how are they motivated?

The modern economic system, merely by existing, creates and maintains a body of collective representations which must be obeyed by the agents of production, and especially by its directors. In their position in industrial organization some of them feel that they have a duty to accomplish and that they bear heavy responsibilities: it is only natural that they should wish to justify the social level at which heredity, chance or circumstance has placed them by the quality of their work.

Although this feeling is brought about by the pressure of their environment upon them, it is another form of individualism, since the chief object of such men is to justify themselves in their own eyes by the proper fulfilment of their appointed tasks. This motive takes on a more social form when their main concern is with the opinion of others. As members of a high social class, they feel that "*bourgeoisie*" (no less than *noblesse*) "*oblige*"; and they are anxious to prove to others that they are worthy members of this class. It is a typical bourgeois preoccupation, and makes them conform to the morality current in their circles, where it is allowed that a man may do anything for the sake of money as long as he conforms to the practice and traditions which are the corner-stones of the prestige of the whole class.

But naturally trade, industry and economic methods and organization have evolved at the same time as society, in particular bourgeois society, has changed. As early as the Middle Ages, while the guilds ruled trade and industry within the towns, they could not impose their customs or their morality too strictly on aliens who took it upon themselves to link diverse urban markets together. In each there are traditional methods of making money and others that can be labelled modern. It is especially noticeable that new strata of the bourgeoisie rise up, enriched by the methods they have been the first to exploit, in every epoch of economic change.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928-29, p. 478: The great upthrusts of the bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain, Portugal, Holland; the industrial revolution in Great Britain; the Victorian era (portrait of the late nineteenth-century English bourgeois, by Schulze-Gävernitz), from the nineteenth to the twentieth, from the war to post-war years.

Apart from this, in every society that has evolved at all there are spheres in which production and sales take place within a long-established framework, other spheres with new and constantly changing frameworks: money markets and financial circles, new industries and trades, or new groupings and associations of old industries.<sup>1</sup> The new type of trader and manufacturer brings with him ideas and habits borrowed from circles outside the traditional bourgeoisie: from artistic and political groups, the world of the theatre, the Stock Exchange, newspapers, sport, foreign and cosmopolitan circles that are more various and accessible, where men of all backgrounds meet and jostle as though on neutral territory. One has only to read Balzac's novels, the faithful mirror of economic society in transition, to see the vivid contrast between the two kinds of tradesmen and business men. Again, one thinks of the saint-simonian manufacturers who took up bourgeois careers at the beginning of Louis-Philippe's reign. These men, who constructed the first railways, organized the finances of publicity and advertising, built international canals, speculated in housing blocks and sites in large towns and developed the banks, had learnt from philosophers, scientists, artists and even members of the working classes to think in terms of vast projects and complex procedures that were better suited to a more developed and far-flung society than to the Western world of their time.<sup>2</sup>

This new type of bourgeois was formed in a section of society different from the traditional bourgeoisie, one less impervious to fresh influences. Its morality was also different. Men were sized up and admired not so much for their energy and persistence in trade and business, their integrity and individual

<sup>1</sup> This is how Simiand explains the particular situation and activities of the Jews under the *ancien régime* (excluded from the guilds, the administrative bodies, alien everywhere, and hence acquiring a commercial morality peculiar to themselves). *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, Leipzig, 1911, French ed., *Les Juifs et la vie économique*, Paris, 1923. See our review in the *Année sociologique*, XII, 1913, p. 623.

<sup>2</sup> See in *L'Ecole saint-simonienne, son influence jusqu'à nos jours*, by Georges Weill, Paris, 1896, the Mediterranean system, pp. 112-113, and Chs. V. (the Saint-Simonians in Africa) and VII (the Saint-Simonians under Louis-Philippe), and, in *L'Histoire du Saint-Simonisme*, by S. Charléty, Paris, 1896, Book IV (*Le Saint-Simonisme pratique*).

deportment, as for their social sense as it was developed in an expanding class perpetually renewing itself, wherein the man aware of collective realities and able to adapt himself quickly to customs and institutions as they were transformed, was most highly thought of.

So we arrive at a new conception of the entrepreneur: no longer that of a man of strong personality who thinks of his enterprise as a possession and subordinates the agents of production, the consumers and clients, to his own ends, but that of a man with an important social function of which he is fully conscious, subordinating himself to it, associating himself closely with the enterprise, even identifying himself with it.

Industrial and commercial success does after all imply very special qualities in its leaders; they may appear in more or less picturesque guises outwardly, but they have to be considered principally in terms of economics: the ability to co-ordinate the various elements of an enterprise, to maintain its general direction, to perceive its connections with others and with the general state of business. All this supposes an entrepreneur thinking and acting as a collective person and representing an impersonal function, however strong his own interests. From this point of view there is only a difference of degree and complexity between the private enterprise of the past and the modern running of a business attached to a cartel or combine, or one whose public nature is even more marked and important.<sup>1</sup>

Sombart has suggested that "in a modern business concern that meets the requirements of a capitalist economy there is no place for the soul." He quotes Ford's remark: "A gigantic firm is too big to be human. As it grows bigger it stifles personalities. In a great firm, the individuality of employer and worker is lost in the mass." In other words, rationalization and scientific methods have slowly substituted an abstract intelligence for a personal spirit in business firms, dehumanizing them. Sombart compares the individual personality of the old type of entrepreneur with the new one, reduced like the worker to being a cog in the wheel of a firm

<sup>1</sup> See our *Revue critique des travaux sur l'évolution récente du "capitalisme,"* in *Annales sociologiques*, Series D, Section I, 1934, pp. 141ff.

controlled by abstract reasoning and technical considerations.<sup>1</sup>

But a business undertaking is usually more than a mere piece of mechanism. In the past it has undoubtedly drawn its distinctive character from its head, and it still does in many cases to-day; but it is tending to take on an existence and consciousness of its own which imposes itself even on those in charge of it.

Speaking of modern limited companies, Simiand says that when they have succeeded in repaying their capital and are no longer dependent on their shareholders, they continue as though they were self-owned. He adds: "At this stage such a company is like a collective being; of a private nature, but in reality similar to those of public nature such as townships and States which are independent of individuals and have continuous lives separate from those of their individual members. One can go as far as saying that such an enterprise often acquires a certain definite and distinct personality, and is concerned with realizing projects which are its whole *raison d'être*."

Such a nature is fully developed only in industrial organizations that are very advanced and specialized. But it seems to reappear, more or less disguised, at every stage of their evolution; economic success depends, and has always depended primarily on the ability of the head to identify himself with his firm, itself a collective being, and to become imbued with its personality.

There are, of course, many obstacles in the way of the growth of a genuinely social frame of mind amongst the bourgeoisie, or even to the simple spirit of mutual assistance. In the first place this is because the class is divided into several large groups whose methods of maintaining and augmenting their incomes are too disparate for them to have recourse to the same kinds of organization.

The higher civil servants have a statutory income, fixed by law. In the liberal professions the fees of doctors and lawyers, etc., are fixed by the current usage of bourgeois circles. A few associations are found here and there, of course, but only

<sup>1</sup> *L'Apogée du capitalisme, op. cit.* (Part 3, *La déshumanisation de l'entreprise*, II, p. 409).



within the bounds of each profession; they are not inspired by a more general class feeling.<sup>1</sup>

As for industrialists and business men, the law does provide for the formation of employers' trade unions. Some have been set up. In addition to this, there is a striking tendency in modern industry and capitalism to join the various firms engaged in the same industry or branch of industry into national or even international structures, trade associations, cartels and so on. Such associations and syndicates can form themselves into even larger unions. The objects of this kind of industrial groupings, however, are to foster production and widen and control national and international markets. It is in the field of production above all that they are formed, not for the distribution or fixing of profits: for industrial and business profits are the result of the particular efforts and conditions of each firm, and cannot be settled by collective rules. Hence it follows that there is no organization uniting the different categories that form the bourgeoisie: for each has its own particular way of maintaining and raising its members' positions.

The fierce competition within each category must also be taken into account. Individual hard work and good luck carry a civil servant to the top of the hierarchy; a doctor improves the numbers and quality of his clients in the same way, and an entrepreneur above all widens his market and enlarges his profits similarly. This individualism that lies at the roots of the modern industrial system has been more or less in evidence, of course, as the different phases we can distinguish in the history of the class succeeded each other. At the end of the *ancien régime* the new bourgeois class organized itself against the nobility, at first in and around the *Parlements*, in the *Tiers Etat* and the assemblies that paved the way for it, and in the revolutionary assemblies. Then, its rights having been acknowledged, and gathering momentum, its very movement towards success gave it a sufficient unifying principle, and the necessary conditions for its continued progress were complete freedom and an absence of all traditional bonds amongst its

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1930-31, p. 572.



members. For several decades now, however, it has grown more aware of the disadvantages of competition than of the profits derived from it, and it is again trying to organize itself. But there is a latent contradiction between the associative and bourgeois sentiments; the class lacks a common concept of its place and function in society.

Let us nevertheless consider the words of a large-scale industrialist speaking to engineers and business men; he is proclaiming the end of liberalism: "If we are to have a new order, it must be we, who in varying degrees are leaders, who take the initiative. . . . Research must be applied to solving problems in every sphere through corporate feeling and agreement, before the State takes them over by force. Liberalism has given us very bad habits. It has sanctified egoism. . . . There has been collective endeavour in the past, but only as a defence measure, an association involving no great sacrifices and intended only to increase profits or diminish losses. . . . It has resolved a certain number of personal problems but left aside general ones. . . . What is needed is collective endeavour in the public interest. . . . We must banish bit by bit the idea and the reality of social classes through education and through universal easy access to the best jobs. We must all think as though we were the common people." <sup>1</sup>

This is no isolated voice. Already some of the leaders of industry and the bourgeoisie are affected by social consciences. It is around this notion of the general interest that a new class of "producers" (in Saint-Simon's sense) could be formed, a class of temporal leaders, as Auguste Comte called them, aware of their social functions.

<sup>1</sup> A lecture by M. A. Detœuf, *La fin du libéralisme* (*Bulletin du Centre polytechnicien d'études économiques: X—Crise*), Nos. 31-32, May-June, August 1936, pp. 48, 49ff.

## Urban Environment and Industrial Civilization

### Part 2

#### THE WORKERS IN LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRY

IN France the industrial and commercial population (that is, employers, salariat and workers), including both self-employed and employees, makes up nearly 50 per cent of the total active population—in fact, 49 per cent divided as follows: 38 per cent in industry, 11 per cent in commerce. These are the figures given by the 1921 census. Confining ourselves to the 38 per cent in industry, four-fifths of these are workers in the sense given by the census, that is they do manual work for an employer; and these amount to about a third of the total active population.

Separating the workers in the larger manufacturing units (employing five or more people) from the total number of industrial workers, we find they form 32 per cent in the middle of the nineteenth century (earlier the figure is much lower), and later reach 50 per cent, but do not exceed it. The most characteristic working class group is made up of these factory workers who form about a sixth of the population.<sup>1</sup> It includes nearly all those employed in the chemical industry, metal

<sup>1</sup> (Cf. *Villes et Campagnes*, *op cit.*, p. 130, Pierre Coutin's report: "Out of 4,368,598 workers in industrial factories in 1936, as against 1,200,000 agricultural workers, 941,941 (approx. 21·6 per cent) were in factories with from one to ten workers;—1,251,478 (approx. 28·6 per cent) were in factories with from eleven to 100 workers;—1,043,752 (23·9 per cent) in factories with from 101 to 500 workers;—1,131,427 (25·9 per cent) in factories with more than 500 workers." If the last three figures are combined we do in fact find they amount to one sixth of the active population.—Editor.)

works, mines and open-cast mining, and also navvies, builders, textile workers and iron and steel workers.<sup>1</sup>

Whether we restrict ourselves to this category of workers in large-scale industry only or consider workers in general, we are dealing with very large and relatively stable numbers. In spite of economic fluctuations (which are probably severer than is generally realized) these numbers have been very similar under similar economic conditions, i.e., from one prosperous period to the next.

These figures give some idea of the extent of this class, one which scarcely existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in our modern civilization. Indeed, under the guild system all craftsmen were masters of journeymen, most of whom were themselves certain of becoming masters in their turn. Nowadays, again according to Simiand, the results of the censuses concerned with the divisions of age groups in the different categories of the population are as follows: in France, out of 100 active people in each group, the proportion of those who will work in factories for an employer all their lives, that is who will remain workers in the narrow sense, is only 10 per cent in agriculture, whereas it is 40 per cent in industry in 1901, 43 per cent in 1921. Taking into account home workers, irregular workers (those who do not work consistently for the same employer) and independent semi-manufacturers and producers, we find: in agriculture, 30 per cent in 1901, 20 per cent in 1921 (remaining workers throughout their lives); in industry, 60 per cent in 1901, 66 per cent in 1921. So approximately 60–65 per cent of the workers will remain as workers

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928–29, pp. 448 and 450. As far as other countries are concerned: in Norway, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Denmark, whose agricultural population forms, as in France, 40 per cent, the proportion of industrial workers is smaller; it is much larger in England, Scotland, Belgium; somewhere between the two figures in Holland, Germany and Switzerland; on the other hand, it is considerably smaller in countries with a high proportion of agriculturalists: Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Hungary. In 1927 the agricultural population of the U.S.S.R. formed 87 per cent. In industry, the proportion of workers was 41 per cent of the industrial population, but came to well under 5 per cent of the total active population. In the U.S.A. the proportion of the industrial population exceeded 44 per cent in 1920 (it was 40 per cent in 1910); the agricultural population, 35 per cent. Australia and the Argentine give similar figures.

all their lives; that is, they will be concerned only with the carrying out of work and will have no part in directing, controlling, buying raw materials, selling, credit, etc., which will occupy the head of the firm alone.<sup>1</sup>

From this data it is at once obvious that the desire to be one's own master, to own one's business or concern and not to be dependent on anybody, which seemed so widespread amongst the peasants, is felt only by a limited number of the working classes forcibly enough to make them prefer their own little booth or home workroom or shop to the huge workrooms and yards of the big factories, in fact to working for big industry.

But Simiand has also pointed out through his methodical researches that more workers take up independent pursuits in times of economic prosperity than when prices are falling and stabilizing and incomes dropping. "In times of large-scale increase in both world values and the quantities of goods produced, chiefly marked by a sharp rise in prices, the proportion of genuine workers employed in the big industries does not grow very much. But in times of hardship, or at any rate when values are falling, with more products and lower prices, the proportion of workers rises to a greater extent, particularly in the big firms."<sup>2</sup> For during favourable times, when there are credit facilities and sure sales, the small firms grow as much as the big ones.

During a depression the situation is different: at such times many independent men are forced to take jobs in factories (since they are well qualified workers themselves, they find work in spite of the unemployment) and the workers have no incentive for setting up on their own when they see how their independent fellows suffer from the bad times. Naturally, every worker would prefer to be his own master, and as soon as occasions present themselves plentifully and the example of others' successes encourage him, he will consider setting up on his own. But more often than not, when he compares the prospect of big risks and heavy responsibilities with the security

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, p. 454 (the lasting nature of social position: a piece of original research which could not have been undertaken at an earlier date).

<sup>2</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, p. 451.

of a job which regularly brings him the means to live and keep his family, security wins over the taste for independence.

Grouped together in mines or in teams on machines, workers appear as disciplined bodies of men. They carry out orders; they have no say in the commands. All decisions as to the technical ordering of production, and more especially as to the fixing of prices and the economic conduct of the firm, are taken without reference to them. Of course they are to some extent free to choose the trade or industry they pursue. Everyone is eager to fill a job which will make full use of his personal characteristics and aptitudes. This is the basic principle of vocational guidance. But this system is, on the one hand, still imperfect and uncertain, and on the other it is in conflict with the very conditions of industry. Work cannot be adapted to the aptitudes and tastes of the labourers, it is rather they who must adapt themselves to the available jobs. Heredity, or rather the example of the parents, plays but a limited part in the choice of work. In this respect the worker's chief guide seems to be existing circumstances.

At all events, workers—trained men in particular—who have pursued the same trade for some time are very reluctant to change it. This explains why progress was very slow in industries of long standing, such as the wool trade in England, at the beginning of the industrial revolution: the workers were content with low salaries as long as they could remain in the same job.<sup>1</sup> In the same way in recent times, unemployed workers have preferred to remain unemployed rather than appear to lose caste by taking up another trade less highly considered. A characteristic inertia comes about in some working class circles for this reason, or rather for two reasons, habit and professional pride.

Once the worker has taken up a particular trade, the question arises as to whether he is free to determine for himself the speed and rhythm of his work. It would appear, for instance, that his position is not the same when he is paid for time as when he is on piece work. At first sight piece work seems to leave the worker his freedom in two respects: he can increase (or limit)

<sup>1</sup> Paul Mantoux, *La Révolution industrielle au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Essai sur les commencements de la grande industrie moderne en Angleterre*, Paris, 1906.



his gain, and he can increase (or not, or even diminish) his effort; if he chooses to, he can work harder and augment his income accordingly.

Payment by the hour, on the other hand, leaves him with one opportunity only: in a given period he can work harder or less without altering his wages. In either case the worker is comparatively free to exert himself as much or as little as he likes.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, it is well known that in many trades the workers are hostile to piece work, for obvious reasons. When they are paid by the hour, their employers cannot be certain that they are exerting themselves fully; by instituting piece work, the workers are stimulated to go all out to increase their incomes. Once this has been tried out, there is nothing to prevent an employer from reverting to payment by the hour and dismissing those who do not work at the rate established by piece work, or alternatively, from keeping piece work while reducing wages so that the worker gets no more than he used to. In this respect, then, there is not much to choose between payment by the hour and piece work. The former implies the minimum effort each day, the latter the maximum effort.

In such conditions the worker is not free to determine the speed and rhythm of his work; they are controlled by other agents. In fact, new methods have been recently introduced, the Taylor method and other schemes for organizing work scientifically; these involve training foremen and time-clerks who will be able to demonstrate to the workers what their duties are in detail, for how long they should relax between each movement, etc., so as to give the best results. Such new methods, which are the answer to certain industrial requirements, tend in general to reduce the personal initiative shown by the worker.<sup>2</sup>

Up to this point we have been considering workers as individuals; but it is the attitude of workers faced by employers or employers' groups, in fact their collective behaviour, that really gives a clue to what determines the most important

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc., *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> See our article *Matière et société* in the *Revue philosophique*, July-August 1920, pp. 98ff.

things in the worker's life: the amount of his wages and the quantity of work he gives for them. His contract with his employer is individual only in appearance, for in such a matter he will be following the will and custom and inclination of his group. His actions are ruled by collective motives.

From this standpoint Simiand distinguished several collective tendencies which he formulated, setting them out in order of decreasing intensity, as follows:<sup>1</sup> 1. the tendency to preserve constant wages; 2. the tendency to work at the same rate (in other words, not to increase exertion); 3. the tendency to raise wages; 4. the tendency to work less hard. He established that, as a general rule, the first tendency is stronger than the second, among the following the second is stronger than the third and so on. Thus, for example, the workers would be willing to work harder to keep the same wages, or they would sacrifice higher wages, possible if they worked harder, for the sake of not doing so, etc. Such are certainly the central determinants of working class conduct in this field; we shall now set about analysing them one by one.<sup>2</sup>

1. *The tendency to preserve constant wages.* The fact that this is the chief concern of the workers is due to the way in which wages have fluctuated. The fluctuation can be traced for more than a century in France throughout long alternating periods of expansion, rising prices and increased incomes; and hardships, falling prices and even temporary decreases in earnings. In times of prosperity prices go up and with them the incomes that are based on them, not only the employers' profits but the workers' wages too. This is easy enough to explain.

What seems harder to explain is what comes about after a crisis, when prices are falling. Profits and costs might be expected to fall as well. But it is essential to the employers, too, to maintain their profits at the same level, which is why they make every effort to reduce wages, and at first succeed to

<sup>1</sup> *Le Salaire, l'Evolution sociale et la Monnaie, essai de théorie expérimentale du salaire*, 3 volumes, Paris, 1932, Vol. II, pp. 478ff. See our article, *Une théorie expérimentale du salaire* (*Revue philosophique*, November-December 1932, p. 353).

<sup>2</sup> Simiand added that when these tendencies conflicted, as between employers and workers, it was the more intense (whichever class was upholding it) that carried the day over the less intense tendency in the other class.

some extent. But the workers resist this move, and so the employers are forced to try other methods; they attempt to get more out of the workers, to introduce technical improvements into the works and to exercise stricter control over all the elements that make up the cost price. The wages are in fact more or less stabilized at such times.

This goes to explain why wages increase in the long run, why increases once gained are retained, and why the position of the working classes on the whole tends to improve. Improvement, however, depends on the workers exerting themselves considerably at certain periods so as not to risk losing the advantages they have won.

This tendency is not explained simply by the workers' insistence on the same needs always being met; they appear to fight not so much for a real salary, with expenditure on food and services in mind, as for a nominal salary, that is for the monetary amount of the salary.<sup>1</sup> And indeed the value of work in money is of the first importance in an economic society dominated by pecuniary considerations. To the worker, the size of his wage-packet represents the progress he has made over a course of time, being an assessment not only of his work but of the human being engaged in it; this is why he will if necessary work harder if that is a condition of maintaining his wages at the same level. When there is a lot of unemployment, one way of reducing it would be to employ more workers at lower wages; but the men still at work oppose the idea. They would rather pay out benefits to the unemployed in their trade through the trade unions and keep them out of the labour market.

They are unwilling to admit that labour is a commodity like any other, and is subject to the law of supply and demand. They believe that a working contract is not an ordinary commercial operation. The wage worker is not like a shop-keeper who sells a product which he has bought, since the worker has not bought his ability to work, and he has no other way of determining the value of his work than by referring to what it has been worth in money up to the present. This is the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 390, and Vol. I, p. 156 ("real" and nominal salaries).

basis for the much-quoted principle: equal pay for equal work.

2. *The tendency to work at the same rate.* The effort expended in manual labour is one of the connexions established between the worker's performance and his wages. If the employers lengthen the working hours without increasing the wages, the price of work is again in question and may be decreased by these indirect means. Hence the workers' objection to the normal working hours being exceeded.

It is of course possible to obtain longer and harder work by various methods of fixing wages: by bonus systems, for instance, operating when a certain yield or number of hours is arrived at. But the workers suspect that these bonuses are worked out without due awareness of the real sacrifice involved in additional labour beyond a given point. Consequently they are in principal hostile, at any rate collectively, to any scheme designed to increase their output, either by making the working day longer (even with an overtime bonus) or by the introduction of such methods of scientific organization as are mentioned above, since these often consist of making them compete in emulation of each other's achievements.

Circumstances must be quite exceptional before men are willing to work harder: either they must fear a drop in their usual wages, or feel they should be making the most of a favourable situation (this is what happened in the United States when salaries were high). In Soviet Russia, Stakhanovism (that is the spirit of sport introduced into industrial work, a preoccupation with beating records) was connected with very special conditions that answered to the five year plan: collective enthusiasm and devotion inspired by a social and political ideal.<sup>1</sup> But basically it could be called an application of the Taylor system in another form: ordinarily the hardest-working individual (not group) is picked out, the incentive being an increase in wages; in this case other means are used—propaganda, publicity, national press coverage of the achievements, etc.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Georges Friedmann, *Un aspect du "mouvement stakhanoviste"* (*Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, March 1936, p. 166, bibliography, note 3, same page).

<sup>2</sup> *U.R.S.S. Réflexions* by Ernest Mercier. *Éditions du Centre polytechnicien d'études économiques*, January 1936, p. 60.



In England, the object of the trade unions has always been to specify the amount of work corresponding to a given unit-wage, and they have brought pressure to bear in the different trades, now for work to be paid by the hour, now for piece work, this being the best way of verifying the correspondence.<sup>1</sup>

But there is something more than a determination to prevent wages from being lowered by indirect means in the claim for an eight-hour day before the war and the struggles of the I.L.O. since the war to ensure this eight-hour working day for every country. Industrial workers are asking for more rest and more leisure.

It is not that they necessarily consider factory work and work on building sites, etc., degrading and unpleasant. Many workers are passionately interested in their jobs, their tools, the difficulties they have to surmount, the material with which they work, its properties and forms. The unemployed metal worker can see the light from the great furnaces dancing before his eyes in a mirage of nostalgia. The leather worker snuffs up the smell of tan with positive enjoyment. One often hears engineering workers and even builders and navvies chatting lengthily, outside their working hours, of the machines they have set up, the sites they have worked on, the tunnels they have pierced, the bridges they have built, etc. Their work does not seem unnatural to them, they do not think of it as doing violence to human nature.

And it is true enough that all the workers' activities are based on human instincts and tendencies. Sensory quickness, sureness of movement, nervous strength, muscular force, ingenuity, agility: all these active and sensory powers seem to develop quite simply from dispositions which belong to human nature and are in it in an embryonic state before they become effective in a given trade. So the worker's affection for his trade and his particular job can be, and in many cases definitely is, a strong incentive helping him to tolerate a great deal of hard work and many deprivations.

On the other hand, the labours of the working man have many unattractive aspects: they are often monotonous,

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice and Sydney Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, 2 vols., London, 1897 (methods, the standard rate of wages, part 2).



forcing him into a kind of strictly limited mechanical activity concerned with only one aspect of the material he is dealing with. Specialization, it is true, takes us nearer the heart of things, and the man who masters one trade, one task, is superior to the superficial amateur who tries to cover every aspect of nature and exercise every human faculty, succeeding only in frittering away and wasting his powers. But the essential condition of the worker's job is that it forces him into contact with inanimate matter for most of the day: whether it be the soft and fragile material with which textile workers, spinners and weavers have to deal, hard and resistant material such as the miners work in, solid or molten matter, wood, dangerous or dirty matter, and so on. The result is that the industrial worker is cut off from the world for most of the time, in contrast to all the other agents of economic life, tradesmen, wage-workers, foremen, cashiers, etc., whose work brings them into contact with people and does not remove them from human society.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the worker is with a team, pulling his weight with his mates and co-operating with them. But the co-operation is entirely technical. It is their strength and their physical movements that the men pool. They are in touch mechanically, not through their thoughts or feelings. But man as a rule needs human contacts and the society of other men. That is why the day seems long to the worker when it keeps him at his working bench or in the toils of his physical task.

3. *The tendency to raise wages.* Turgot's phrase is often quoted: "In every trade the worker's wage is naturally limited to what is necessary to keep him alive"; similarly, Ricardo's: "The natural price of labour is that price which is necessary to enable the labourers, one with another, to subsist and to perpetuate their race, without either increase or diminution." Wages, then, must ensure the worker's subsistence: but everything depends on the meaning attributed to the word "subsistence". Take a working class population with very small demands, such as was found in many industrial areas at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc., *op. cit.*, pp. 55ff. and pp. 74ff.

It could be said that wages were based on needs.<sup>1</sup> But then how do we account for the rise in wages? Subsistence is no longer limited to the satisfaction of the most primitive needs. In fact needs have grown and multiplied; but it is hard to say whether this is the reason for increased wages. It could equally well be maintained that successive wage increases brought about by other causes allowed new needs to be felt and satisfied.

Whatever the true case, this motivation is much weaker than that to maintain wages, because the latter springs from an attachment to the social level already attained, and the former from the concept of a higher social level which, to some extent, can only be theoretical. It is even weaker than the tendency not to work harder. In short, it comes into play in times of rising prices when the workers realize that the products of their work are being sold at a higher and higher rate; or again, when workers see that wages are not at the same level in the same trade in different parts of the country. In these two instances they seem to object to their employers wanting to be alone in prosperous times in profiting from an increase in the price of the product of their common labour, or to be the only ones to profit from a regional variation in wage rates.

These observations establish that the workers see a quantitative connexion between their wages and the price of the product.<sup>2</sup> Possibly we can go a step further: there is a quantitative connexion between prices and wages; now wages represent the value of work. A quantitative connexion is a connexion established between two quantities. On one side we have prices, which are quantities; so we must have a quantity on the other side—the side of work and the value of work. Consequently the workers think of their labour as a quantity, that is something measurable and homogeneous.

And yet labour does not seem, at bottom and on its own, to be a quantity. It becomes so only when the human agent is thought of purely mechanically or physically. But work involves something quite different: it is a psychological and human reality. In a natural or family economy such as

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *L'Evolution des besoins dans les classes ouvrières*, Paris, 1933, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc., *op. cit.*, p. 110.

existed before the growth of modern society and the introduction of money into agricultural communities labour was not treated as a quantity.

There may have been some sort of communal system; or perhaps men received equal rewards whatever their work. Perhaps good will and zeal, psychological and moral qualities, were taken into account. The nature of labour has not changed simply because we have adopted a money economy: it remains something non-quantitative.

Why, then, is it described as a quantity? A money economy depends on the pecuniary accounting of products and services. For labour to be introduced into an economy based on exchange it must have a monetary equivalent, like every product and all goods. This equivalence may be illusory, an appearance or mere description, but it is none the less a valid description. Once it is recognized, scales of wages can be established and increases demanded if prices in general, which are admittedly connected with wages, go up. But this will happen only in a time of rising prices, and will not of necessity involve a change in the length of the working day.

4. *The tendency to work less hard.* This is the weakest of the four tendencies, but it is nevertheless a real one and does appear in practice. There are reasons for it being relatively feeble although not altogether negligible.

When large-scale industry was beginning it must have been difficult to get the first factory workers to apply themselves to continuous work with no other prospect than that of taking up again on the morrow what they had been doing the day before. When entrepreneurs and business chiefs set about breaking-in the natives of Africa and Asia to industrial work in our own times, they find themselves up against the time-honoured habits of people with few needs who are accustomed to a way of life quite unlike the discipline of the workshop.<sup>1</sup> Sociologists have observed that slavery has been introduced into some parts of the world only because the natural yield of the soil met all the needs of its people. Indisposed to work of their own accord for a wage, they had to be enslaved.<sup>2</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Greaves, *Modern Production among Backward Peoples*, London, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Or. H. J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System*, The Hague, 1900.

consideration also accounts for the system of forced labour that has been applied in some of these areas.

Nevertheless, in our western societies labour and regular, constant activity, sometimes of an intensity to use up all a man's energies, has increasingly become the rule. As a result, time that could have been and is not spent on one's job is thought of as being wasted. People no longer quite know what they would do with their time if they had it at their disposal. Every reduction in the working hours sets a difficult problem: how is the leisure to be spent, since life is organized for work and not for anything else? Men have lost, or perhaps have never been able to develop other tastes and needs.

Of course workers do sometimes envy the men of other classes who are not bound to go to the factory every morning when the siren goes and stay there all day until the knocking-off signal. But since most of their contacts are with other workers, it seems quite natural to them to spend their whole lives doing jobs they are accustomed to: the more so, since every break or accidental reduction in their working hours means their wages are lower. In times of partial or total unemployment, their one desire is to work their accustomed hours as a necessary condition of their wages remaining at about the same level.

A different situation arises when men see a chance of working less hard and yet keeping the same wages at a time when there is no possibility of earning more for the customary amount of work. In fact the position of the working class is fixed in the social scale by two factors: wage rates (the more important factor) and working hours. When there is no question of wage increase to improve his position, a man with increased leisure feels heightened in his own and in other people's esteem. It is a matter of social regard, of standing. First, and indirectly, the workers' labour is more highly appreciated since it costs more per unit; but above all it leaves them with more time to participate in social life as it exists outside the factory and places of work.

These possibilities are due chiefly to mechanization and technical progress. At first the workers did not realize this: they saw only that the introduction of machines meant the reduction of manpower. But the biggest result of mechanization and economic progress in general was that each worker's



output was increased, or else maintained whilst his working hours became much shorter. It was thus possible to reduce the working day without reducing production; it could even be increased for the same capital outlay and labour expenses. All this has led not only to the eight-hour day but to the English week, the forty-hour week, and paid holidays. But since these reforms were only brought about by collective action, we must now take a look at the worker's organizations.

\* \* \* \* \*

The degree of solidarity, or the social sense, that Western working class groups are capable of appears in the extent and the form of those associations which they have established—in the first place, trade unions.

The French revolution, in suppressing all the corporate bodies of the *ancien régime* by the law of Le Chapelier (1791), prohibited workers as well as their masters from associating either permanently or even temporarily and consequently from calling a strike. The '*droit de coalition*,' that is the right to stop work as a result of a common decision, was recognized in France only in 1864. Strikes came about all the same, but they were confused, disordered and sometimes violent. It was thus, nevertheless, that the workers first showed their need for agreement and concerted action. For if their condition has improved greatly during the last century, it has not come about automatically. They have had to struggle: each wage increase, for example, has been accompanied by working class movements, sometimes many and lengthy, sometimes few and short-lived. If the strike can be said to be the exercise of a necessary function in society, in the long run the function created its own organ. Since 1884 workers, as well as employers, have been allowed to form professional organizations in France (according to the law of Waldeck-Rousseau).

The trade union (*syndicat* in France, *Gewerkschaft* in Germany) is defined by Beatrice and Sydney Webb as "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives."<sup>1</sup> Certainly

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice and Sydney Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, 1666–1920, London, 1920, p. 1.



at various times in working class circles, the most widespread aspirations have appeared in the trade union movement, tending not only to improve the workers' conditions within the actual framework, but to do much more; they have sought to modify the whole economic organization, to change its fundamentals and to give the workers some part in, if not entire control over the direction of businesses. A famous theorist of revolutionary trade unionism before the war used to say that what mattered for trade union workers was not the gaining of a few limited successes in the struggle for higher wages; the important thing was, through the struggle itself, especially when the whole working class participates in it, to inflame its class feeling by the creation of myths: myths of the revolution, of the general strike, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Without ignoring or neglecting aspirations such as these, and their results, we must note that, in the overall development of the working class movement, many of the most important federations and trade unions representing the type of worker found in large-scale industry have not subscribed to them. And even in the places where one might expect such tendencies, one must judge by what the members actually do rather than by their words. There have certainly been some more or less recent cases, lasting for a few months in Italy and for longer in the Soviet Union, in which the entire direction of firms by workers' unions has been given a trial: but they are exceptional cases, working uneasily and soon abandoned. By contrast, working class organizations as advanced as the German trade unions were extremely wary in face of the law on works councils, although it seemed to guarantee them a place in the general running of the company. British trade unions reacted in the same way to Guild Socialism which planned to bring the whole management of business into the hands of the trade unions.<sup>2</sup>

In France too there have been workers' associations or production co-operatives which aimed at abolishing management by calling on the workers to run the business and share

<sup>1</sup> George Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, Paris, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928-29, p. 491.

the profits themselves. But apart from any other consideration, these associations cover only a tiny fraction of the working class as a whole. An enquiry by the Labour Office in 1897 showed that they made up only 0.25 per cent of the total number of workers, and to-day the percentage is even smaller. There are  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million trade union members in Great Britain (in 1920 there were  $8\frac{1}{2}$  million, before the 1914-18 war 4 million)—that is roughly 20 per cent of the male population before the war and half the industrial male population. In France, before the war<sup>1</sup> trade union members were thought to form 20 per cent of the industrial male population, that is about 1 million; by 1920 their numbers are up to about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million, about 50 per cent, and to-day they appear to be more numerous still. Germany had as many as 10 million in 1914, but there has been a considerable falling off since, and in 1920 they came to 4 or 5 million, about 35 per cent of the industrial male population. In the United States it stands at about 20 per cent. This proves conclusively that there is no comparison possible between the membership of trade unions and of producers' co-operatives.<sup>2</sup>

Another consideration is that although many of these co-operatives were started by trade union workers after strikes, it looks as though they can only succeed when they are administratively and financially independent of the trade unions from which they spring. Finally, the real trade union movement has in fact largely grown up since it has dissociated itself from the movement for producers' co-operatives.

The main concern of the trade union, then, is the improvement of the worker's condition and not the suppression of the condition itself; and no doubt this expresses the feelings current among the workers. It shows that they on the whole recognize that their condition is a clearly defined and permanent one.

For a trade union to be founded and to work at all there must be a distinct and lasting division between employers and workers. Mechanization and the growth of great industrial centres can also assist the growth of trade unions, but these are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions. In the U.S.A.,

<sup>1</sup> (Halbwachs's references are, of course, to the 1914 war.—Editor.)

<sup>2</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, p. 500.

that is in a country which is very advanced economically, with concentrated industries and a high degree of mechanization, trade unionism is in many industries less highly developed than in the corresponding ones in France. There must then be other necessary factors.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place there are no permanently and continuously active associations of the lowest grades of the working classes in either England or France. Such people live in one of two ways: in some cases they are passive to a degree scarcely credible, as, for example, in domestic industry and the textile trades during the first half of the nineteenth century; in other cases the workers react against their exploitation and their grinding poverty with sudden revolts, unthinking violence, machine breaking, destruction, etc., which are followed by the return of passivity and oppression. Trade union organization has only recently become general at the slightly higher level of the semi-skilled trades. It is not always given full backing, and in fact it is always instituted through the action and influence of workers in other trades, particularly the corresponding skilled ones.

Trade unions were first and most effectively formed among relatively high categories of workers such as printers, glass workers, skilled steel workers, etc. Hence the reproach made to English trade unionism in Victorian times: that it was a working class aristocracy seeking and obtaining privileged conditions for its members rather than general rights for the whole working class; and it is true enough that it was mostly qualified workers who formed trade unions to exclude non-members from their jobs and to maintain high wages. This is the explanation of their remaining in favour of the out-of-date practice of apprenticeship.

This tendency is seen even more clearly in the U.S.A., where the first trade unions, formed by highly skilled and comparatively well-paid workers, inherited some of the exclusiveness of the guilds and kept lower grade workers out of their trade.<sup>2</sup> This spirit long survived even in the American

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, pp. 496ff.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Marjolin, *L'Evolution du syndicalisme aux Etats-Unis de Washington à Roosevelt*, Paris, 1936, p. 100 (the domination of the qualified workers).

Federation of Labour which Samuel Gompertz steered in a different direction. Its effects are still felt in the hostility shown to certain groups considered undesirable, such as Chinese and Japanese immigrants and new arrivals from European countries with a low standard of living. Similar reasoning led the Printers' Federation in France, to debar women from its unions for many years.<sup>1</sup> Hence the somewhat exclusive atmosphere that goes with the higher social level of these groups.

This exclusiveness is not enough in itself, however. The members of the group must be aware of what their social level represents and what it entails—its standing, in fact; there must be communal sense not only of their condition but of their needs, their traditions and inclinations, either in the local or professional and industrial sphere. Simiand points out in this connection that a sociological reality is expressed in the frequently misconstrued phrase, "the class-conscious organized worker" (*l'ouvrier conscient et organisé*), that is one who knows that, along with his fellows, he fulfils all the conditions necessary for organization.<sup>2</sup> When, on the other hand, these groups try to expand to the utmost so as to embody and encourage the fullest possible collective consciousness, they lose force; although they do not collapse altogether they lead a very reduced existence.

It is certainly odd that the trade union, that most characteristic working class movement, should have originated among its highest members. We have already seen that their working conditions tend to unfit the class for the more advanced forms of social life. But there are some sections whose conditions differ from the majority; the work may be less absorbing, less mechanical and monotonous, it may even provide occasion for thought; or the wages may be high enough to allow the worker to make good some of the wear and tear caused to his social as well as his physical nature; or finally, and this is perhaps the most important factor, a more complex relation between wages and work may incite him to communal thought—for in these circumstances thought is profitable only when opinions are pooled and exchanged. In such groups the first need felt

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc., p. 95, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, p. 499.



would be organization, and its members would be the best qualified to achieve it.

This naturally raises the question of class solidarity, and whether one can properly speak of a unified class if its élite organizes itself specifically to mark itself off from those outside its ranks. Currently we differentiate between skilled workers and unskilled, and there certainly does seem to be a big difference between the extremes of each grade. But in practice there are countless transitional stages in which the unskilled worker acquires little by little skills that make his work quicker, easier and more reliable; or in which the qualified worker needs as much brute force as skill. There are, for instance, many groups such as the miners who are hard to place as skilled or unskilled, and whose work resembles that of navvies and other completely unskilled labourers.<sup>1</sup>

What settles the question is that the trade union movement has now spread to all workers, and has more and more become an image and, as it were, a precise and complete blue-print of the whole class. This is what the *Confédération générale du Travail* is in France, and the various confederations, federations and unions in other countries. The actual organization is within the factories; each worker in the trade union feels a sense of responsibility towards his own particular section: it is the basic form of association, working closely with its members, and within it they feel their solidarity at its strongest. These various production groups join in a larger association in the federation of the whole trade or industry; the progress of this type of organization demonstrates the working class's growing sense of unity within society.

But the heart of the matter is not trade union structure, but its spirit which transcends trades (as it does their leaders), and is inspired by social, not technical considerations, by a humane and well-defined concept of the workers' condition. It is as though any step forward by one group, be it high or low in the scale of wages, must benefit the whole class. It is not that wages are to be equalized, but that all must have the same guarantees; all must be able to escape arbitrary treatment and exploitation,

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La Classe ouvrière*, etc., p. 94.



as far as economic conditions, varying naturally from one trade and industry to another, allow.

In theory wages are fixed by individual contracts freely entered into. This was not what had happened under the guild system when the masters conformed to customs and common rules founded on tradition in their dealings with their journeymen. Neither wages nor working conditions depended on the individual employer or the individual worker. Now the isolated, pre-trade union worker had access neither to support nor advice in this matter.

He could oppose his employer only with his own individual point of view, which contained very little factual information, and his needs, which could always be questioned, since they were, superficially at any rate, the needs of a single person, not of a group. That is why, as soon as the workers were allowed to associate, the trade unions opposed free contracts, not for their freedom but for their individuality. The trade unions have tried to replace these by a collective fixing of working conditions, at the same time remaining within the structure of free economic relations.<sup>1</sup>

By this attitude the trade unions aim at re-establishing real equality in the contractual field between workers and employers. But such a policy also accords with economic realities; and the workers get a better sense of such realities and of their true position in industrial society through its adoption.

In fact there could be only two cases in which individual contracts would be justified, neither of which exists in reality. Either it would be a matter of selling goods (in this case the labour or the energy put into it) by free bargaining between the employer, who is the buyer, and the worker, who is the seller. But the worker does not sell his labour as a dealer, since he has not bought it and cannot fix its value to himself. The idea that labour cannot be treated as a commodity whose price is fixed by supply and demand establishes itself in working class circles as at other social levels.

The second case would be that of a contract concerning a service or services one person undertakes to render another:

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, p. 506.

services that mean something specific not only to the employer but also to the employee, in that they bear the mark of personality. This involves individual bargaining between one man and another. But we have already seen that working-class labour is not of this kind, and that strictly personal qualities are not taken into account—qualities such as a greater effort being made for the same result, good will, devotion to the job, zeal, honesty, etc. Working-class labour is not considered in our economy as individual matter, but as part of a collective and homogeneous force; the units are interchangeable and conceived of in a purely quantitative way.

It is from this point of view that the trade unions aim at establishing collective conditions wherever and in so far as the work actually entails common conditions among the individual workers. Hence trade union action, far from wanting to confine advantages to its own members, as might be supposed, speedily insists on provisions which straightway affect all the workers in the trade, whether they are union members or not.

The general rule is the protection of the individual or isolated group. This gives rise to the principle: equal pay for equal work, in compass and time (at any rate as a means of defence). And this in turn leads to rate-fixing, at one moment for piece work, at another for pay by the hour, according to industry and whether one method or the other best enables an assessment of whether the same work is in fact being paid for at the same price. It also leads to action designed to limit the length of the working day and week, so as to prevent the employers from lowering the wage per exact unit of work by lengthening hours. Again, it leads to the struggle against unemployment, being an essential part of trade union activity: the trade union pays benefits to the unemployed because they threaten the employment and working conditions of the employed. Finally, it leads to the trade union attempt to settle wages and working conditions by means of collective contracts.<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking, the object of all these rules is to improve the lot of the less well-placed workers, or of those who risk, for one reason or another, being less well treated than others, so

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *ibid.*, pp. 509ff., 520.

that all shall share the same fate, and in this way to consolidate the progress already made. The trade unions make use of such formulæ as, "a national minimum," or "the living wage." These are based on the idea that the working-class situation is dependent chiefly on the value placed on human labour and on the worker in general by a public opinion confirmed by the standards already attained. They rely on society's estimate of them; but even more on the working class's opinion of itself and the position it has made for itself in society. In this sense they are surely the chief organs of class consciousness in working circles.

We shall only mention in passing the existence of friendly societies, groups privately formed with a financially interested voluntary membership. Their aim is to assist their members in circumstances where their incomes are reduced, such as illness and invalidism, old age and even death in some of its effects. The number of these societies grew considerably during the nineteenth century, mostly in times of increasing prosperity. Otherwise, French workers have not had much to do with them. Saving, in fact, plays a small role amongst the working classes in general. It is legislation for social services that has covered them against accidents, illness, unemployment, invalidism and old age.

The co-operative movement, on the other hand, is a noteworthy social achievement; after trade unionism it is the most important manifestation of solidarity and organization as these have appeared among the working classes. Simiand describes it in these terms: "It is not a hothouse plant, but one exposed to every wind that blows; it has not been favoured by the powers that be, especially at the outset, and has not always been held in good repute least of all in its early days; in the past it has met with fierce competition, and it still meets with some; and yet it has been successful economically, and is to-day very widespread and still spreading."<sup>1</sup>

A few figures will show its growth since 1880. In the United Kingdom there were 500,000 members in 1880, 1 million ten years later, 2 million in 1905, nearly 3 million in 1914, nearly

<sup>1</sup> *Cours d'économie politique*, 1930-31, p. 639.

5 million after the war. In Germany there were 100,000 in 1880, nearly a million before the war and more after it. In France, there were 200,000 in 1895, nearly a million before 1914, over 2 million afterwards. This comprises over 30 per cent of the population in England (multiplying by three or four to represent families), 15 per cent in Germany, slightly less in France. The increase is bigger for business figures. In a year, each member bought on average 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 or more francs' worth of goods—this applies to the last few years. There are already a great many families in certain towns and regions who buy all their groceries, fresh foods, bread, cooked meats, and even hosiery, linen, shoes, hardware and household goods—if not everything they need—through the co-operatives.<sup>1</sup>

To understand why the workers have taken to this form of association (for the membership is mainly a working-class one), a distinction must be drawn between the promoters, who are most closely bound up with the movement, and the body of ordinary members. The motives of the promoters are set out in the first declaration of the Rochdale pioneers (twenty-nine poor weavers who had the idea of joining forces to found this type of society in 1843) as it is given in the text-book of the English co-operative movement.

The given object of their society is to make arrangements for the financial benefit and improvement of the social and family conditions of its members by raising enough capital in £1 shares to carry out the following schemes: the setting up of a shop to sell foodstuffs and clothes; then the building or purchase of houses; then the founding of factories to give work to its members; next, the acquisition of land to be cultivated and to form special settlements; finally, the establishment of a temperance hotel. It is an ideal of social reconstruction bearing the stamp of its time, but it is nevertheless, for all its ambitious

<sup>1</sup> (Recent figures given in the I.L.O. publication, *Le mouvement coopératif et les problèmes actuels*, Montreal, 1945. Membership of co-operative supply stores: Great Britain, 8,703,314 (plus 69,911 in Ireland) in 1941; Germany, 2,010,911 (in 1937); France, 1,800,000 (in 1937). Individual membership of the International Co-operative Alliance: Great Britain, 7,852,000; France, 3,636,000 (in 1938); Germany, 2,901,000 (in 1932). *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 117 and 167.—Editor.)



nature, full of practical and positive good sense, with immediate ends in view. This mixture of faith and shrewdness, of bold social imagination and commercial prudence, is one that characterizes many leaders of the co-operative movement to-day.

It is possible that the great body of members recognize some such concepts at the back of their minds, but they are attracted and bound to these associations chiefly by the material and moral advantages they receive. Through their own organization, equally independent of state control and of ordinary private business, they are, firstly, certain of buying goods at something very near cost price. But what weighs more heavily with them is that they share in profits in proportion to the amount of their purchases. This is a basic rule because it personally interests each member in the results of the common activity, and because the dividend is often big enough to make him feel that he too is an owner of capital. Some of this capital, at any rate, is left with the society; it is a form of saving that suits the workers' habits and characters since it is automatic and does not involve any deliberate effort and sacrifice. And, of course, it concerns not only the men but their wives, who pride themselves on being good housekeepers; the whole family contributes and takes an interest in it.

Finally, this capital (to which the subscriptions, paid off over a period of time, and the members' deposits are added) differs from any other in that it bears interest only, and that each member, whatever his capital and however large his deposit, has an equal voice in the society: "One man, one vote" is the principle that has prevented anyone with a predominant share in the capital from taking control.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See G. Fauquet, *Le Secteur coopératif, essai sur la place de l'homme dans les institutions coopératives et sur la place de celles-ci dans l'économie*, Brussels, no date (1935): "Because of the personal and family nature of the units it gathers together, the co-operative association is not an impersonal assemblage of capital, but an association of human beings. In the co-operative association the whole human being is concerned, the social man bound to his fellows by a whole series of ties other than the purely economic ones." Hence the rule of equality amongst the members, the disinterested devolution, the habitual practice of devoting part of the annual surplus to societies for education and the benefit of the working class community in general.



There are no privileges, rival factions or struggles for power in these democratic societies. Quite apart from furthering the programme, propaganda and faith in the co-operative movement, it is to the advantage of the existing members to seek out and encourage new members. The greater the working capital of the whole group of societies, the easier it is to obtain fresh advantages by forming wholesale stores and factories for flour milling, shoemaking, etc., and for providing financial and banking services. Again, the members feel they are discouraging consumers from paying for the profits of private capitalists, and ensuring for them the full use of their purchasing power which, along with their ability to work, constitutes all the workers possess, and everything which they are anxious to keep as far as possible in their own hands.

Trade unions and co-operatives, then, are the two most highly evolved forms of working-class association, and, up to the present, the clearest manifestations of their social capacity.

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In dealing with the co-operative societies we have already touched on that aspect of social life that takes place outside the factory, where the workers can share in the goods and privileges that are within everyone's reach. We shall now go on to consider how far their needs are satisfied, and a possible classification of these needs.

Psychologists tell us that needs are psychological tendencies of a qualitative kind. They can, however, be measured, particularly in their collective form. We have only to take into account what expenditures are made and how big they are to see how needs are satisfied and which are of primary importance to the working classes.

In the middle of the nineteenth century a type of enquiry was instituted to study the incomes and expenditures of the different classes—i.e. family budgets. The study of consumption (which is the most difficult to carry out) gave the best results in Germany, notably in an enquiry made in 1928–29, under the supervision of the Statistical Office of the Reich, which persuaded 2,000 families to keep exact daily accounts of

their income and above all of their expenditure.<sup>1</sup> One thousand working-class families, 500 clerical workers and 500 minor civil servants were involved, so that it is possible to compare one category with another, particularly where the incomes are equal.

Other enquiries have been carried out, in the U.S.A. in particular, using different methods.<sup>2</sup> Instead of asking the heads of families to keep budgets, they were given questionnaires—an extensive research method as opposed to the intensive German one. To compensate for its superficiality a very high number of households—10,000 or 20,000—is covered so that mistakes can be assumed to cancel each other out, and big differences contrast clearly enough. There is much to be learnt from these enquiries.

Expenditure has to be classified according to needs. These fall, for the most part, into four main categories. Three correspond to the most central needs: food (including drink), clothing and housing. All other spending comes under the simple head of “Other Expenses”.

It is noteworthy that in the earliest budgets we have on record from the first days of large-scale industry, food, housing and clothing absorb almost all the income, and there is nothing left for other expenses. Since then, however, the workers' wages have increased, their standard of living is higher than it used to be, and the category of other expenses has grown considerably larger.

1. *Food*. Nourishment is the prime necessity: “*primum vivere*”. The question of how workers should be nourished has often arisen; it is the elementary need, and if it is not satisfied men can neither survive nor propagate. Only last year<sup>3</sup> the League of Nations and the I.L.O. put this problem on their agendas. It was considered from various points of view, such

<sup>1</sup> *Die Lebenshaltung von 2,000 Arbeiter-, Angestellten-, und Beamtenhaushaltungen. Erhebungen von Wirtschaftsrechnungen im deutschen Reich von Jahre 1927-28. Einzelschriften zur Statistik des deutschen Reichs*, Nos. 22-I, 22-II, 2 vols., (Teil I, *Gesamtergebnisse*, Teil II, *Einzelhaushaltungen*). Chapter II of our book, *L'Evolution des besoins dans les classes ouvrières*, op. cit., deals with this enquiry.

<sup>2</sup> See, in our book, *L'Evolution des besoins*, etc., p. 74, and the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> See the report made by the I.L.O., *L'Alimentation des travailleurs et la Politique sociale*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1936.

as that of the big agricultural countries that want to sell their produce and hope they would sell their wheat and livestock more easily if the consumption of the workers was raised. But the hygienic and medical point of view was considered the most important. Strictly scientific research has been carried out on the best diet, the necessary minimum to ensure the renewal of tissues, the restoring of energy, to allow workers with ordinary or specially tiring jobs to stand the loss of energy they entail.<sup>1</sup> But the doctors over-emphasized mere quantity of necessary chemical constituents, vitamins, proteins and amounts of energy, worked out in calories, which should be found in a diet. Such attitudes lead to treating man as a sort of engine which has to be supplied with a certain amount of fuel or energy.

And we must not forget that workers, like other men, eat for nourishment and to restore their energy, but also because they enjoy eating; and thus further considerations are involved which must be taken into account. Food should be attractive and sufficiently varied. Then again, the workers have to provide for their dependants, their wives and children.

From the sociological level dietary questions pose themselves differently. Traditional factors, habits and preoccupations of a social kind come into play, for there are some goods which are not eaten because they are considered inferior, others which much prized not only for the physical pleasure they give the eater but because they are considered to be socially distinguished. A man rises in his own estimation as well as others' when his table is well furnished.

Nevertheless, to the working classes this is the most purely physical and organic need, the one whose social aspect is least important. With this in mind it should be appreciated that food is their principal expense. Where incomes are equal, expenditure on food is higher among workers than among clerical workers or the lower civil servants.

It is perhaps pharisaical for us to accuse the workers of

<sup>1</sup> E. Burnet and W. R. Aykrood, *L'Alimentation et l'hygiène publique* (published in the *Bulletin trimestriel de l'Organisation d'hygiène*), League of Nations, Geneva, 1935. See also the *Rapport sur les bases physiologique de l'alimentation*, presented at the London meeting, November 25-29th, 1935, by the Technical Commission of the Committee of Health, League of Nations, Geneva, 1935.

spending too much on food: they spend so much, it could be said, because they must keep alive. But in fact, without blaming them for devoting so much of their money to food, it is true that they could economize on food if they had other needs to meet. The proof of this is that, given special circumstances, working-class families are able to diminish this expenditure very greatly. Compare expenditure in a childless family and in one with three or four children: it has been worked out that for each human unit (i.e., taking age into account when calculating units) intake can be reduced by as much as 42 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Even this need, then, has a certain elasticity. Still, we must remember that it is primary in working-class households, and the need on which the workers are prepared to spend as much of their income as they can.

2. *Clothing.* Where incomes are equal, the proportion of expenditure on clothing is much the same for workers as for clerical workers.

A comparison can be drawn, however, between the amounts spent on different members of the family. Supposing there are two children to each household, and that they can be treated, for our purposes, as one adult. In clerical workers' homes the biggest expenditure is on the father, then on the mother, lastly on the children; whereas in a working-class home it is divided into three more equal parts. Considering that expenditure on clothing involves appearances as well as necessity, and that it is the father and next the mother who are concerned here, it is obvious that this aspect is much less important in working-class homes, which in this sphere are content with what is merely necessary.

Another comparison can be made by distinguishing, amongst clothes in general, between outer garments and linen and shoes. Compared with clerical workers, manual workers spend less (in proportion) on outer garments, more on linen and very much more on shoes. It is a well-established characteristic of theirs. Here again, since outer garments are the most noticeable part of clothing, on which the attention is first and most easily fixed, the conclusion is that workers spend less for show and outward

<sup>1</sup> See in our book mentioned above, *L'Evolution des besoins*, etc., the table on p. 47 and Diagram 1 on p. 48.



appearance, more on indispensable things, than clerical workers.<sup>1</sup>

Expenditure on clothing answers to certain needs: the need to be covered and protected against extremes of temperature; and the need to attract attention with bright colours and a well-fitting and picturesque costume; this is already a beginning of social awareness, but in an elementary form, as it is found in the animal kingdom (the peacock's display of tail feathers, the plumage of birds, etc.) and above all amongst savages. This need takes on a strictly social aspect as soon as the wearer is concerned to obtain not only the superficial attention but the respect of others—to prove by his dress that he belongs to a high social class and moves in polished society, or looks as though he does.

This leads us to think that workers have fewer social pre-occupations than clerical workers. Let us now consider an expenditure even more markedly social in nature.

3. *Expenditure on housing.* Where incomes are equal, the workers spend much less on this than the clerical workers. It is one of the most striking features of the way in which these latter spend their money. In every income group represented in the German enquiry the same pattern repeats itself, and in every enquiry made over the last twenty years in various countries such as the U.S.A., where workers enjoy a high standard of living, the results are similar. The difference is not very big, but it is a real and abiding one.

It is not only the rent that has to be taken into consideration, but also various other aspects of housing; that is, not only the price but the quality of the thing itself: space, for example, airiness, the number of inhabitants per room, and the provision or lack of modern comforts of even the barest kind, such as water, gas, electricity, a bathroom and plumbing and sanitary arrangements. Every one of these amenities is sought after much more keenly by clerical workers and civil servants.

Working-class households are very definitely characterized by their inferior accommodation, because they are less willing than others to increase their expenditure on housing.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 39ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 28.



We have already seen that they could reduce their expenditure on food and devote the difference to paying a higher rent. But in addition to this, if they really wanted better housing conditions very much, and wanted the extra money to pay for it badly enough, they would find it. One has only to consider how money is found to spend on wine in France. Simiand said wine consumption was one of the means of raising working-class wages in France because, being accustomed to a given amount, the workers resisted any reduction which might deprive them of it. If then the housing conditions of this class are no better, it is because the need for a comfortable home is not felt strongly enough.

Several reasons can be given for this. In the first place, other commodities such as food are sold in markets and open shops where people of all classes can choose what they want. Although a few shops are patronized almost exclusively by the rich or the poor, most cater for all classes. Since everyone can buy the same foodstuffs the different classes tend to imitate each other's tastes. Clothes, too, are worn out of doors, and people of different classes meet and notice each other, so that there is a certain uniformity here also. A common market exists for food and to some extent for clothes, but not for housing. There is one market for the rich or socially superior, another for working-class people. Moreover workers do not often have occasion to see the inside of middle-class homes; it is harder for them to compare them with their own and to realize their degree of comfort, and they do not miss what they have never known.

Again, there is not much difference as to appearance and comfort between the workers' factories and their homes. Their passage from one to the other does not evoke comparisons, and they do not mind finding the same rather shabby furnishings at home, and a generally bleak and unadorned air similar to that of the factory or work place. Clerical workers and civil servants, on the other hand, work in well kept and furnished offices where they are comfortable, and they would find it hard to go home to inferior rooms.

But the principal determinant is found in the answer to the question, what is involved in the desire for good housing?

People entertain their friends and relations in their homes, of course. Much social and worldly life takes place naturally in the home; but it is primarily the shelter of the family. The English word "home" implies this, just as the French word *foyer* does (troops, liberated soldiers are sent home to their *foyers*). It is the framework for domestic life; the man who wants his family to be comfortable, to enjoy life together and keep in good health, looks for spacious, pleasant, and even, within his limits, luxurious accommodation. Are we to conclude that, since the worker feels this need much less than members of other classes, he is therefore less attached to family life than they? If this is so, then he differs radically from the peasant and the bourgeois.

And certainly there are few institutions with less in common than the factory and the family. In the world of industry, as we have seen, the worker to some degree loses his personality and is treated as an object. The family group, on the other hand, is a tiny society in which the relations between each person are lively and individual, not mechanical and emotionless as they are at work. The individual is valued as such, his character and idiosyncracies matter. He is not replaceable but occupies his own definite position in the opinion of the others, both for what he is and for what he was. The family group is self-sufficient, with no outside object, unlike a factory, which is producing something. To this extent the two centres formed by families and industrial groups could not be less alike. It is scarcely surprising if men who are forced to spend a great part of their time in one every day lose awareness of what the other would be to them if only they spent more time in it.<sup>1</sup>

Under these conditions, the worker's natural and preferred environment is not his home, but the street. The streets of our big towns make up a sort of intermediary zone between factory and home. It is a part of the social world in which life is not lived too intensely and is still mechanized. Along the streets stand houses, shops, stations, walls covered with posters, official buildings and warehouses and factories whose doors open straight into the street. And the straightness, narrowness or

<sup>1</sup> On these two aspects of working-class life, see our book mentioned above, *La Classe ouvrière et les niveaux de vie*, pp. 129 and 130.

width of the streets and alleys and avenues, the geometric shapes of the squares and blocks of buildings, the various turnings forming a crossroad, and the movements of the traffic—all these make the individual in their midst feel like some speck borne away in a great current. Pascal said: "When a man stands watching the passers-by at his window, and I happen to walk by, can I say that he stood there on purpose to see me? No, for he is not thinking of me in particular." He does not really see me; he sees a creature that, so far as he is concerned might as well be some inanimate thing.

The street is a much more mechanized and less social environment than the family group. In comparison, the street is really "the outside world;" but compared with the place of work it is, for the worker, a transitional stage between the factory and the home. Instead of hurrying through the streets on their way home once they have left the factory, many of them linger, caught up in every eddy, absorbed by all they see. It is to them an almost completely satisfying form of social life. This may be a result of an inadequate family life, or perhaps cause and effect are the other way round. For the life of the streets enters into the home life in working-class districts. Everyone is only too ready to look out on to the staircase and the yard and all the bustle and movement of the crowded streets. In fact no distinction can properly be drawn between cause and effect. Both the importance of street life to the worker and the lack of family solidarity are the result of his working conditions in the factory affecting his whole life.

4. *Other or miscellaneous expenses.* These amount, on average, to a quarter of the workers' total expenditure, whereas for clerical workers they average one third. And while the proportion of expenditure on clothing and food is about the same for workers whatever their total wage, that is it scarcely varies away from the average, the proportion in this case rises by 29 per cent from the lowest category to the highest (whereas the proportion spent on food drops by 18 per cent). It tends to grow the moment the income is high enough to allow it to. Once more turning to the German enquiry we find that the details of these other expenses are interesting. If we add expenses incurred through illness to what the worker pays for

insurance, we find he spends much more than the clerical worker. He also spends more on tobacco. Clerical workers spend more on hairdressing, education, journeys, sports and amusements. For insurance—other than against illness—fares, papers and books and laundry, there is very little difference between the two groups.

Such are the conclusions we arrive at from a study of working-class needs. These do not follow the same pattern as those of other groups; and those which involve bigger means and make larger demands on family and social life as it is organized in our societies, together with a taste for such a way of life, are less fully developed among the working classes. It is not easy to say whether this is a definitive condition. Our study is concerned only with the past and the present. There may well be changes, foreseeable by examining conditions in countries like the U.S.A. where traditions are less powerful and innovations easier to bring about.

Again, the warping effect of being kept in isolated contact with inanimate matter is greater and less remediable the longer the working day. If the working hours can be cut down, and if at the same time workers can be freed from these somewhat abnormal conditions for some part of the week, they will have a better chance of building up their social natures again. Doubtless it is a matter of *primum vivere*. But enough time and resources can be left over for them to be able to participate in the highest forms of collective life.<sup>1</sup>

Let us see what we can learn of such possibilities from an enquiry made in America, in Detroit, covering 100 working-class families, towards the end of the period of high salaries. It is a very valuable enquiry as it is a record of the most advanced state the working class has hitherto attained, with the highest wages and living standards ever reached since the beginning of industry.

Concentrating on the heading of miscellaneous expenses, we see that they form about 30 per cent of the total expenditure (as opposed to 20 per cent in 1902), and that they have

<sup>1</sup> *Standard of Living of Employees of Ford Motor Co. in Detroit, Monthly Labor Review*, June 1930. See also, in our book mentioned above, *L'Evolution des besoins*, etc. Chapter III, pp. 97ff.



increased in absolute value by 45 per cent since 1902. Again, of the 100 families scrutinized, 35 owned a wireless, 13 a piano, 45 a gramophone, 76 a sewing machine, 21 a vacuum cleaner, 51 a washing machine, 98 an electric iron, 6 an electric toaster; 94 had carpets in their living rooms, 90 in their dining rooms. Finally, 47 families owned a car. On the whole this period saw reduced expenditure on food (32.3 per cent of the total in place of 43.1 per cent in 1902), rents rising slowly, but new needs, never or scarcely ever felt before, suddenly becoming prominent. At the same time the workers took out more insurance policies and went more often to the doctor.

In so far as the workers' new needs are met by household gadgets and mechanical devices and amusements, or by the services and privileges gained through public and private organizations (themselves run on mechanical and rational lines), so far does their dependence on these imply that they are part of a civilization that transcends them and dominates their lives on every side. And, on the other hand, needs that are more familiar and long-established lose something of their importance. In the past people could feel that buying food or moving into a house meant participating in a civilization that had instituted feeding and housing according to a certain pattern. This old type of civilization still exists, of course, but it has lost its prestige because it has done its duty and everyone is used to the satisfaction it has to offer.

New inventions and products, and also group amusements, travel agencies, health and hygiene organizations, savings, insurance and credit societies—these dominate life to-day not because they are mechanized in structure or running but because they stand for contemporary society and its leading tendencies; more generally, they seem to represent a civilization which is, rightly or wrongly, considered wider, richer and more progressive than any other.

Such influences have been followed the more submissively by the working classes, since they are less used to and bound up with the old ways of life and kinds of civilization that tend now to be dismissed as outworn. The workers never knew the advantages inherent in these old forms since they were without the money they possess to-day. So it is not surprising if they



connect their new-found wealth with the new forms of social life, and are accordingly less sensitive to the defects of the new society.

And of course the American working class is characterized by a fairly simplified form of family life (involving an out-of-door existence, meals in cheap restaurants, clubs, etc., the least possible time spent on household tasks, a growing divorce rate), by somewhat limited religious needs (a religion that is more and more practical and materialistic), by insufficient cultural needs, and finally by a poorly developed class consciousness.

We may conclude, then, of workers in general, that they obey three main determinants: to maintain and raise their living conditions by collective measures; to form professional organizations and associations for the development and satisfaction of their social consciousness; and, finally, when their wages are high enough to leave them a surplus after their basic needs have been met, to participate as far as they can ever more fully in modern civilization as it grows and develops.

## Urban Environment and Industrial Civilization

### Part 3

#### THE LOWER MIDDLE, OR INTERMEDIATE CLASS

THIS group has been vaguely and variously defined; it has been called "a permanent category of men with their families, possessed of a moderate income and often a little private property, situated somewhere between the highest social class and the workers and salariat." And it is usually thought of as being "mainly urban, found most frequently in the smaller towns," and including the highest grades of artisans, the smaller shopkeepers and industrialists, some members of the liberal professions and the middle grades of the civil service.<sup>1</sup> But all these are somewhat negative characteristics. In other words, they are definitions that don't do more than distinguish this class from the workers on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other, as though they simply filled a gap between the two; or which otherwise merely list occupations juxtaposed for no good reason, with the suggestion that they form a unified class.

This strikes us all the more clearly as the professional groups gathered together under the heading "intermediate classes" show marked differences, and the behaviour of each group is determined by its own set of motives and conditions.

1. *Artisans and Small Tradesmen.* The self-employed and those working on their own are treated separately in censuses. Doubtless many of these are not artisans in the old sense of the word, for they include men employed at home, who are for the most part true workers even though they do not go out to

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928-29, p. 470.

a workshop. Casual workers who move from one employer to another are included in this group too. Moreover, artisans working on their own perform the same tasks as other workers and do not as a rule earn more. Since, nevertheless, they are in direct contact with their clients and attend to the financial side of their business, they are usually classed with the small tradesmen in this intermediate class.

In France, the proportion of these isolated workers is quite high in some trades: rather more than half (from the whole body of workers in the broad sense) working with dress materials and in the clothing industries; about 30 per cent (another high proportion) in leather and skins, straw, feathers and horsehair; still quite high, about 20 per cent, in the wool industries, and in precious stone cutting and polishing. But in building and construction, the textile industries, iron and steel and other metal industries, precious metals and jewellery the proportion is less than 10 per cent; it is even lower in the catering industries and the book trade; almost non-existent in the chemical industries, metallurgy, mining and surface mining. In short, the percentage of all manual workers is not higher than 15 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

This proportion remains fairly constant from one census to the next. Marx and other later economists were too precipitate in forecasting the disappearance of independent workers. They have survived (unlike the small tradesmen, whose numbers are continually on the wane) either because certain traditions support them, or because in some industries, such as made-to-measure clothes and certain repair work, there are good reasons for the client remaining in direct contact with the individual workman.

How are we to account for the survival of this group? There is of course their attachment to the independent status, comparable with the feelings of the peasant landowners. And indeed they are not dependent on a director or entrepreneur, but work on their own account and are concerned with both the craftsmanship and the technical and commercial management: functions which are separate in big firms, where the

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1930-31, p. 500.

directors run the business and the workers and salariat carry out orders. Of course the independent man uses his hands for at any rate part of his job, and in this respect he resembles a worker in a big firm. But he differs in that he owns his equipment, rents his own workroom or shop, buys his own raw materials, supervises his market and sales, and deals direct with his clients; he has even to look after the financial side of the business and manage his small capital. It is often difficult to draw the line between such men and real entrepreneurs. We have to take into account the size of their capital, and of more importance still, the amount of manual work done behind the counter or in the workshop.

This independence is of course often somewhat illusory, since these people are subject to the conditions of the labour market as well as the market for products. But that they cling to it notwithstanding is demonstrated by Simiand's observation that in times of prosperity not a few workers leave the factories to set up on their own and that, conversely, after some time in a period of scarcity the proportion of independent artisans drops.<sup>1</sup>

Let us consider how they were affected by the recent depression and its social consequences, making use of a study by the I.L.O.<sup>2</sup> In this case we must differentiate between small tradesmen and artisans. It is then apparent that the available labour force for commerce increased in many countries during the depression. This is all the more startling since the volume of trade fell considerably. The conclusion to be drawn from this, however, is not that the part played by trade in the aggregate of incomes increased, but that commercial enterprises increased their activity and their staff, simply to maintain their position and protect themselves. In addition to this, the unemployed and small manufacturers put out of work by the depression have tried their hands at commerce. The I.L.O. reports that in France, more than in any other country during the depression, a great many ephemeral trading concerns that struggled for the market, destroying each other in ruthless

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Le Salaire, l'Evolution sociale et la Monnaie*, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Woytinsky, *Les Conséquences sociales de la crise*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1936.

competition, were floated. In fact, this increase in the labour available for commerce is unhealthy and does not imply that it provides a refuge in times of crisis.

Artisans and small-scale, working entrepreneurs did better than factory workers.<sup>1</sup> According to German figures, in 1933 (as compared with 1925) when small firms (one to five people) are distinguished from medium-sized and large, the smaller ones have not been reduced in number except in the mining, textile and clothing industries. There has been a marked increase in small firms in stone and earthworks, metallurgy (increase of 50 per cent), metal goods, machines, electro-technics, paper and printing, catering (increase of 12 per cent), building (18 per cent), water, gas and electricity (28 per cent). Economic activity is an integral part of such men's existence, and it is difficult for them to change their way of life. At all events, in spite of the depression, thousands of bakers, butchers, dressmakers, haberdashers, hosiers, fitters, joiners and locksmiths are still in business.

Their affection for their particular trade must naturally be taken into account as a marked characteristic of this social group. In many cases the success of the artisan, if he is not put out of business by competition from big firms, is due to his professional qualities, to the fact that he is a reliable worker and people look for good craftsmanship above all else in certain products. And the good craftsman is one who loves his trade because he excels at it. Many artisans are aware of this and would feel they had failed if they took work with a factory team on mass-produced goods that lack the personal touch of the worker.

Nevertheless, apart from changes in techniques, certain professions and trades die out of their own accord, having lost their *raison d'être*; but this does not involve a decrease in the number of artisans. They find work in the new trade that is taking the place of the old, sometimes on the same premises. For example, the change in methods of transport has transformed the farrier at the entrance to the village into the garage mechanic; and in this way the number of small

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 246.



businesses has not diminished. Elsewhere there are trades which disappear and are not replaced (water carriers, public scribes; recently, in Constantinople, the street porters) and others are begun and spread in a few years (chauffeurs, typists, cinema attendants, etc.). Taken all in all, the artisan class makes up its losses and succeeds in establishing itself in fields not covered by big business because many workers want independence despite all risks and perhaps also an insufficient income.

This surviving individualism is balanced by a marked lack of social consciousness or aptitude for collective organization. There are some trade unions for artisans, small tradesmen, itinerant vendors, etc., but they are few and feeble.<sup>1</sup> This is because the characteristic opposition between worker and employer is absent, artisans being both. They have, however, attempted to associate themselves, not in trade unions but through co-operative movements.<sup>2</sup> These have been formed, for example, to buy raw materials, and for sales, for credit, for buying tools; in fact, for all the complementary operations their trades involve. But such attempts have never gone very far or given very striking results. For the collective spirit to take root in this group, co-operative action must affect not such side issues as credit, but the work of production itself, the most essential and central matters, working conditions, hours and intensity of work, and the fixing of rates. But obviously the moment the artisans did carry out such a programme they would be well on the way to forming big businesses by amalgamating small ones—and they would find themselves working for large concerns again, whereas their whole *raison d'être* is to exist and to remain outside them.

2. *The salariat or clerical workers.* We shall now turn to the huge category of the clerical workers, most of whom can be

<sup>1</sup> Maxime Leroy, *La Coutume ouvrière, Syndicats, Bourses du travail, Fédérations professionnelles, Coopératives, Doctrines et Institutions*, Paris, 1913, 2 vols. (Artisans', small tradesmen's, ragmen's, tinsmiths', sweeps', commissionaires' trade unions, I, p. 99). See, too, Hector Lambrechts, *Les Syndicats bourgeois en Belgique* (*Revue d'économie politique*, 1908, p. 657) (Small tradesmen's and lower middle class trade unions).

<sup>2</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1930-31, p. 685 (Co-operation among artisans).

assigned to the intermediate class. Censuses have, by and large, included them with manual workers. There have, however, been a few attempts to give separate figures (covering agriculture, industry and trade together) for the proportion of clerical and manual workers employed in firms above a certain given size, compared with the total active population; this comes to about 40 per cent, whereas the proportion of manual workers only is no more than 33-35 per cent; this leaves 15 to 17 clerical workers to every 100 manual workers—but the figure is good only for agriculture, industry and trade combined, and applies only to large-scale firms.<sup>1</sup>

There is a basic difference between this group and that of the artisans and small tradesmen: they are not their own masters. And many more distinctions have to be made within the category itself. At the bottom of the ladder there are any number of clerical workers who are almost members of the working class, since their jobs involve a good deal of physical labour: the butcher's assistant, parcel packers in big stores, even cashiers handling and counting money, and delivery men. In general, the majority of clerical workers are nearer to manual workers than to artisans and small tradesmen in that they do not have to show any initiative, or, at all events, bear much responsibility in the running of the firm as a whole.

But on the other hand at the top of the ladder are the highest clerical workers, who are given the chance to display initiative, sometimes assisting their employers in management, technical, and even certain financial and business operations. In this respect they resemble entrepreneurs and even merge with them, differing from artisans in that they are responsible for much bigger interests and earn higher salaries: engineers, departmental heads, and even some salesmen, and the higher staff in banks, etc., are examples.

At all events, one of the chief determinants of their behaviour (and here they differ radically from workers proper) seems to be their devotion to the business they work for. There are obvious reasons for this. We have seen that workers are paid according to the amount of work they do, that is

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928-29, p. 448.

according to something which is a quantity, a homogeneous thing. Their personal qualities and characters are not taken into account in measuring the amount of work done, but only the expenditure of energy considered as a mechanical and inert force. The situation is different for clerical workers, who are far more closely integrated with their firms, identifying themselves with them.

Their salaries are fixed according to general rules, like workers' wages. But the most important rule in this case is that age is usually taken into account, and the years already spent at the work, particularly if they have been with the same firm. Civil servants receive the same treatment. This is because clerical workers, like civil servants, occupy a different position from workers. Clerical workers are morally concerned with the progress of their firm, and their interest is needed for its welfare, so that the employer has to encourage them in their devotion. Since they transmit the directors' orders and deal with clients, and since the smooth running of the business depends on the accuracy of their accounts, their regular attendance and their assiduity and zeal, they must be able to consider the firm as to some extent belonging to them. The best way of making them devoted is to encourage them to stay with it for a long period—all their working life if possible—and make them think of leaving only at retirement, so that they become imbued with its atmosphere and traditions. Another way is to give extra pay, promotions by selection and honorary rewards, thus stimulating their fervour; for it is much more difficult to watch over their activities than it is to notice rust on a cogwheel or bad workmanship in a product that has been rejected by a client.

What is wanted of them, in fact, is evidence of the qualities depending on character, good will, what can be called the moral nature—demands not made on the worker. Personal relations must be maintained with them, and they must be treated as members of a well-defined social group, which is the firm.

This explains, too, why clerical workers seek to develop the qualities demanded of them; they possess, or they acquire regular habits and accuracy in carrying out their modest

tasks. And they understand and feel that their professional value depends on this: they are the measure of their worth to their employers as well as the good opinion of their fellow employees. And they like the devices used to stimulate their efforts: promotion by seniority, if possible by special selection, and security in their work.

But we must not overlook the fact that trade unions of clerical workers were established at quite an early date in France, and that they are connected with the manual workers' organizations through their affiliation with the General Confederation of Labour. This would apparently point to the distinction mentioned above between manual and clerical workers not being so great as to preclude close relations or even the merging of sections from each group. At all events, it is a mark of the solidarity which at times grows among clerical workers and occasionally spreads further.

And of the whole intermediate class, it is among clerical workers that trade unions have played the biggest part, what is more, their trade unions bear the strongest resemblance to those of manual workers.<sup>1</sup> Because of their economic position clerical workers have often felt that the difference between themselves and manual workers was only apparent, for both groups are dependent on private employers. It is but natural that they should feel it necessary for tactical reasons to take up organizational methods invented by other workers and which had proved successful in their struggle with the entrepreneurs. Moreover, especially during hard times and economic depressions, the lower grades of clerical workers feel themselves endangered. The members of this category earn little more than manual workers; when they suffer further cuts in their salaries and are unable to obtain enough for their basic needs, they feel that they too are exploited and should join together with their fellows; they are therefore ready to strike like ordinary workers.

And yet at such times their social conscience does seem to protest. They do not resort to these methods without a secret anxiety and unease; they are reluctant to merge entirely with

<sup>1</sup> Maxime Leroy, *La Coutume ouvrière*, etc., *op. cit.*, p. 94 (Clerical workers trade unions).



the workers' organizations though they are associates within a common framework. They cling tenaciously to their higher social status and will never forget the distinction between them and wage workers. This indecision and uncertainty becomes obvious when they are forced to act in common with the workers' unions. Differences are preserved; they do not merge completely. Alliances are formed, but the organizations remain separate. The same sort of situation occurs between professional soldiers or an army in action, on the one hand, and an army conscripted from a region that has never been at war and is quite unprepared for it: they can manœuvre together, but they remain fundamentally separate, there is no unity of spirit. In normal times the awareness of differences predominates, and it is not altogether wiped out in the stress of battle. So it is rather more in the sphere of friendly societies and co-operatives, which are not class organizations, that the associative spirit of the clerical workers comes into play.

We must also consider their spirit of providence, their concentration on and provision for the future. Many clerical workers to some degree resemble the bourgeoisie, and hope to raise their financial status bit by bit through setting money aside, living sparsely, investing, taking out life insurance policies. They want to ensure a certain security and some not too costly leisure for themselves in old age. They are thinking, too, of their children, and make considerable sacrifices to enable them to complete their studies in a secondary school, either state-supported or private, and so take the examinations for a pre-University coaching establishment. In fact their ambitions resemble those of the bourgeoisie under the *ancien régime*, who dreamt of entering the nobility themselves or seeing their children do so: in the same way the clerical workers of all grades need, to make their position bearable, to believe that they themselves, or at any rate their children after them, may possibly become members of the highest class; they are already closer to it than the manual workers, being only a few grades beneath it. At the least they are determined that, if their children do not rise in the social scale, whatever happens they will not sink. They rely



on the patronage and the gratitude they can command for their faithful services in one or in a small number of business houses where their sons and daughters may find work. They make use of personal contacts here, in contrast with their collective action over professional matters—but in fact there is no contradiction here, for the clerical workers are influenced now by the class above them and now by that below, sandwiched as they are betwixt the two.

3. *The Lower Grades of the Civil Service.* This is a third category of the intermediate classes, one that has grown enormously with the extension and growing complexity of public services. Its members are nevertheless less numerous than the clerical workers in private enterprise. Although France is known as a country of civil servants, they do not make up more than 5-6 per cent of the population.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between this group and the other members of the intermediate class is very marked. People have contrasted their bureaucratic, routine-dominated and passive attitude with the independent and personal spirit of self-employed artisans—a comparison of the same kind as we have already drawn between artisans and clerical workers. But the civil servants cannot be classed with these latter. Railway workers (although this is not a State enterprise, its workers are under State management and the administration is more in the nature of a public than a private one), postal workers, customs officers, tax inspectors and collectors, local and municipal administrators, school teachers—all these work not for private people or firms but for the State, a collective body.

They are probably subject to stricter discipline and controls

<sup>1</sup> Simiand, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd year, 1928-29, p. 470: "The small-scale employers and heads of firms without a salariat (intermediate class) form 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the active population. By adding the civil servants (including those in public utility undertakings) the proportion rises by more than 5 per cent." (To-day's figures: the active population of metropolitan France was judged in the census of 1946—see above, Ch. II, note 3—to be roughly 20,520,000. The number of civil servants (titular, auxiliary or contractual) is 817,000, which makes the proportion a little under 4 per cent. If we add the 370,000 employed in local administration the proportion is still only 5.78 per cent, and even counting the 96,000 civil servants in colonial territories the proportion is only 6.25 per cent. Of course these figures do not include the 148,000 State labourers or the 490,000 soldiers on monthly pay.—Editor.)

than clerical workers (in this respect some categories of civil servants resemble workers under factory discipline); but although their freedom is less in this respect they do on the other hand represent the State and hold some part of its authority; this gives them a prestige that links them with a higher class. They stand for something in the public eye, and they know it and take it into account in their speech, their demeanour and appearance. It has been established by means of a detailed enquiry in Germany that the budgets of minor civil servants show a far greater expenditure on clothes than the budgets of clerical workers with the same income.<sup>1</sup> The greater apparent dignity is the price earned for the greater degree of dependence, but it is of course a dependence on the State and the public at large, which is common to all ranks of the Civil Service.

Dependence on the State, that is on the whole community, is not servitude but rather its opposite. Everyone who has no public function in society is in some way the servant of a private interest. There is no reason why someone should be more highly esteemed for working in his own interest. Only civil servants are working in the general interest (which is no particular person's). So it is only natural that their primary concern should be to keep up their prestige and the authority of their position—and it is in fact their main preoccupation. In some countries they look for and discover in this sentiment a stimulus to hard work, zeal and even to a disinterestedness characteristic of their élite. But being in a sense less free, and less keen on their liberty than the clerical workers, they have a stronger collective mentality, a group sense and a more compelling professional morality.

Trade unions for civil servants do nevertheless exist, but they are unlike any others. There was controversy for many years as to whether civil servants should be allowed to form them. Until quite recently governmental doctrine (that is,

<sup>1</sup> See in our book mentioned above, *L'Evolution des besoins*, etc., Table I, p. 29. The proportion of expenditure on outer garments, linen, etc., is 12·9 per cent for all clerical workers, 13·3 per cent for all manual workers and 14·3 per cent for all civil servants, but where incomes are equal it is roughly 13·5 per cent. for clerical workers, and 15 per cent for civil servants (the difference is bigger where the incomes are smaller).

of the parties with a majority in parliament) was that they should under no circumstances be granted this right; and this principle has been upheld by the administrations of many states. But opinion has evolved in this matter, doubtless because side by side with the civil servants in positions of authority, are others working on the administrative side whose situation is very like that of the salariat and workers in private firms, as far as both working conditions and income levels go; and with the extension of industrial public services their number and proportion to the others has greatly increased. Civil servants' trade unions, which were tolerated in practice though not officially recognized at first, are to-day allowed in France even among customs officers and policemen.<sup>1</sup> But what they have not won, and this is the crux of the matter, is the right to strike. Any strike by civil servants is illegal.<sup>2</sup> Why is this?

It is because the position of civil servants is, in spite of everything, somewhat special. Their salaries are fixed by law, by legislative measures, not by open bargaining between employers and employees. They are supposed to have means not open to workers and the salariat of obtaining a wage increase or better working conditions in that they can apply directly to the government. The system is based on statutory rulings, not individual or collective contracts.

Of course such pressure as the civil servants are allowed to bring to bear either through sending representatives and setting forth their claims, or by appealing to public opinion to support them, presupposes that they can unite, discuss their position and their interests, choose delegates and draw up programmes. Hence the existence of organizations within this group; but they are of a particular kind, very different from manual and clerical workers' unions (although they bear the same name) in that they were not founded and are not organized with the object of striking.

Thus there are marked differences between the three largest

<sup>1</sup> *La Tribune des fonctionnaires et des retraités*, the paper of the General Federation of Civil Servants, is in its thirtieth year; it was, in fact, in 1907 that the first trade unions for civil servants were formed (note made in 1938).

<sup>2</sup> (The law concerning this point has of course been modified.—Editor.)

categories of the intermediate class, and each category responds to a particular set of determinants resulting from its particular functions in social life. And yet, since all these groups are part of the same social stratum, between the bourgeoisie and the workers, they must have certain characteristics in common; characteristics which we shall now consider.

All the professions followed by this social group, however diverse they may be, are technical to the extent that a technique differs both from the mechanical labours of the manual worker and those more difficult posts which require greater initiative and a wider view. A technique, in fact, involves simply knowledge and the application of rules and precepts issued at intervals to instruct the agent what in general he is to do and say and how he is to act.

A technique is something mainly negative. It sets forth those things without which the function could not work. If a schoolmaster does not follow the syllabus, if a judge passes judgment in the wrong forms, if a banker discounts at an illegal rate, their activity in each case fails to achieve its end. But this is naturally but one aspect and part of such functions, and that the least difficult.

A rule, like an instrument, is applied to a reality which is assumed to be constant and uniform. This is why it is said that there can be no rule for judging characters, feelings and tastes, which are so diverse and variable. But wherever they can be applied, rules would lose all authority if they had to be modified constantly and adapted to momentary circumstances and objects too disparate. Certainly the administrative, judicial and pedagogic rules imposed in individuals from without seem to the agents to be the work of society. They are not natural laws, but resemble them in their rigidity and permanence. The social will behind them has become fixed and simplified: it has abandoned the attempt to adapt to the variations that time and space reveal in society. Of all social action, the technique approximates most closely to the mechanical and non-social.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this distinction between techniques and functions see our book mentioned above, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, pp. 334 and 359ff.



Naturally such techniques are only possible because mankind, the groups of human beings and human characteristics we wish to affect, can in some respects be considered as uniform and invariant realities that can be measured and enumerated—because men can be treated as identical units, assignable to a certain number of different categories. This is how clerical workers, and civil servants too, more often than not think of us.

Nevertheless, if the human beings manipulated by various social functions represent from one standpoint but so much raw material, yet this is essentially human material; humanity reified and momentarily immobilized. And if the action of society upon them resembles physical causation in its uniformity, it is also this action which brings men into contact with each other.

This explains why the people who fill these technical positions, clerical workers and minor civil servants, and even those beneath them who simply carry out orders without much thought or real initiative, are nevertheless in a different category from manual workers whose techniques are applied only to inanimate matter. And it is also the explanation why, in a society which is primarily interested in human relations, clerical workers and civil servants hold a higher place than manual workers.

But on the other hand they remain beneath the level of the highest class, since any technique is only a secondary and inferior aspect of a total function. In other words, society cannot bind itself in the forms it has decreed; technique is not self-sufficient. Left to itself it soon becomes mechanical and routinized. Even within a short period rules must be open to adaptation whenever necessary, and subject to the complex and flux of social conditions. This adaptation is the hardest, but also the most important part of any function. A judge cannot be replaced by a clerk of the court any more than an entrepreneur by a foreman, or a tradesman by a clerk.

There is no fundamental difference in this respect between clerical workers and minor civil servants in charge of the technical part of functions which are carried out and directed either by private persons and societies in industry and business,



or by higher civil servants in the department of justice, public services and administration. Artisans and small tradesmen, too, although they direct and control their own enterprises do not own large firms, and it is obvious that they are subject to custom and regulation, and that they can quickly master their work with training and a little experience. Although they work and manufacture for individuals, yet they are executing the wishes of clients whose demands tend to be pretty uniform. At all events they follow the directives of the large-scale enterprises that regulate the market, and the commercial operations that fall to them are small and simple enough to require only an elementary technical function.

Since all these members of the intermediate classes are to a greater or lesser extent technicians, they feel a devotion to the rules they have mastered and which it is their duty to introduce, apply and maintain in working order over quite long periods and large groups of people. They have the professional pride of those who know themselves to be competent in a sphere of social and human activity. They are meticulous, scrupulous, and faithful to the letter of rules, formulae, and traditional procedures. Already under the *ancien régime* this conformist and formalist spirit dominated the subordinate personnel in royal, provincial and municipal administration, government offices, courts and tribunals, clerks and scribes, etc. This group played an important part in the revolution, in the Paris Commune and in revolutionary committees throughout the land. All over France it was these men who offered to the new regime the experience they had acquired in minor administrative jobs for the implementing of each new measure. Through them a certain continuity of spirit and tradition was established in ministries, tribunals and municipalities as to methods, details of procedure and the running of offices. Artisans and small tradesmen worked with similar effect in the sphere of manufacture and commerce.

But on the other hand this class, whose function is to give stability and continuity to the running of the social machine, sometimes finds it very hard exactly to define and maintain its place in society. Because of its intermediate position it feels drawn in two different directions. At one period it feels closer

to the working classes on account of its precarious and insecure working conditions; at another (sometimes simultaneously) it strives on the contrary to differentiate itself and insist on its links with the bourgeoisie.

These intermediate classes have seemed, of late especially, to be the most affected by the economic movements brought about by the war and its after-effects, particularly in the sphere of private and fixed incomes. Some people have even thought where inflation has been especially severe, as in Germany and central Europe, that this class had been so tried that it was in danger of disappearing altogether. In France too, though to a lesser degree, it is freely admitted that it is the intermediate classes which, as a result of various circumstances, have suffered the biggest relative change in both status and size. Nevertheless, even in Germany, they have been reconstituting themselves quite rapidly for some years now, and the same thing is happening in France and elsewhere.

In short, it is a social category that has been much disturbed by economic fluctuations, particularly in times of hardship and regression, but one which shows great resilience and remarkable powers of recovery. As Simiand says, tracing its history, it seems to shrink in places and yet it maintains itself and even develops new strength in other directions and within new social formations. But these new formations "are not created through its own endeavours. It waits for them to be established before adapting itself to them as best it can." Clearly, it is their servant and not their master.<sup>1</sup> Hence its alternating attitudes: now resigned to conditions and fluctuations it does not understand or see the consequences of, now up in arms in a violent and blind revolt against change which it thinks it can stop or turn aside.

In spite of all this, its role is not negligible. But it tends more often than not to follow momentary and contradictory impulses. For, not being a really unified class, and lacking a wide social horizon, absorbed in the daily struggle for existence, it never clearly enough realizes the mainsprings of its own conduct, which are no more than imitations of those aspirations

which the bourgeoisie or the working classes fulfil. Tocqueville's remark could well be applied to the spirit of the intermediate class which, "in combination with that of the working class or the aristocracy [nowadays, the bourgeoisie] can do wonders, but, alone, can produce only a government lacking all force or grandeur".

## CHAPTER VI

# Conclusion

CLASS, PATRIOTISM, RELIGION,  
SCIENCE, ART, POLITICS, SOCIAL MORALS,  
AS COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

"WOULD you describe the function of a horse," asked Socrates of Thrasymachus, . . . "as that work, for the accomplishment of which it is either the sole or the best instrument?"

"I do not understand."

"Look at it this way. Can you see with anything besides eyes?"

"Certainly not."

"Can you hear with anything besides ears?"

"No."

"Then should we not justly say that seeing and hearing are the functions of these organs?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Again, you might cut off a vine-shoot with a carving knife, or chisel, or many other tools?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But with no tool, I imagine, so well as with the pruning knife made for the purpose."

"True."

". . . Now then, I think you will better understand what I wished to learn from you just now, when I asked whether the function of a thing is not that work for the accomplishment of which it is either the sole or the best instrument?"<sup>1</sup>

This text expresses what could be called the naturalism of the ancients, the great philosophers of antiquity. To them

<sup>1</sup> Plato's *Republic*, Book I, 352 (translation by Davies and Vaughan). Macmillan.

everything had a function which was derived, not from circumstances but from its own nature. Each man's, or rather perhaps each kind of man's function can be defined as exactly as the function of a bill-hook specially made for pruning vines.

Starting here, had we wanted to categorize men according to their natures and the motives of their deeds, their natural determinants, we should have been up against a good many difficulties. The wise, the brave, the greedy, the miserly, the covetous, the indifferent, the passive, the men of initiative, the sheep-like, those who put honour above everything, the devout and the ambitious: we should have had to consider every vice and virtue ever mentioned by the moralists. And we should have ended by realizing that, firstly, men of all moral types are found in every sector of society; and secondly, and this is much more significant, that one cannot say whether or not men regulate their behaviour according to their natural tendencies, since their natures are entirely recast and transformed by social life. The correct question is not being asked.

We are concerned rather with social groups themselves, with men as they in fact are within the framework of social structure; and we have concentrated our attention on the determinants of conduct as these are set in motion by social life.

We have pursued our enquiry within the framework of economic and social class; it has thus become clearer and clearer to us as we went on that no one is born a peasant, a large landowner, a farmer or a farm labourer in the sense that he is born with all the qualities ready made that characterize the men following these different callings. Similarly, people are not born as bourgeois, entrepreneurs, lawyers, magistrates or industrial workers. The character of the clerical worker, the minor civil servant or small tradesman is not a spontaneous growth on the tree of humanity. And, on the other hand, social categories do exist. More often than not they are well defined: altogether distinct, if we consider such cases as the difference between peasant and town dweller or between manual workers and others; scarcely distinguishable when the comparison is between high grade clerical workers and entrepreneurs, or low grade clerical workers and manual workers.



Each of these categories determines the conduct of its members and imposes definite motivations on them; it stamps each category with such a peculiar and distinctive mark, and so sharply that men of different classes, even though they live amid the same surroundings and are contemporaries, sometimes strike us as belonging to different species of humanity. Thus the motives and tendencies governing the majority of men seem entirely correlative to their social conditions.

This is, of course, only one aspect of the question. On the one hand the philosophical naturalism of the ancient world, on the other the scientific and sociological relativism of the modern: we have had to choose between these positions which express very different but complementary facets of reality. Within the social groups we call classes it is in fact true that some sub-sections, and even certain specific individuals, represent more fully and naturally than the group as a whole what can be called its dominant instincts and aspirations. At the beginning of this book I pointed out that the same thing occurred in the family, religious sects and political parties. There is no reason why it should not also be true of social classes.

Sometimes there does in fact seem to be a real and possibly accidental correspondence and accord, almost a pre-accord between personal and innate dispositions and those which answer to the actual situation. Theirs are happy natures, since they find in their very condition a stimulus to developing their natural bent and, being true to themselves and allowing their inborn tendencies free play, they represent with no trouble but with positive ease and satisfaction the very type of what is wanted and expected by their environment. So it is that among kings we find a small proportion who are truly kingly and have established the pattern of royalty. Amongst the nobility we are surprised to find some who were genuinely noble in the full sense of the word, that is within themselves, by their generosity, their great souls, and their disinterestedness as well as by their pomp; men who atoned for the ignoble many, and who time and again restored the prestige of their class.

It is also true of some manual workers that they are true craftsmen. This implies not only that they love their trades—

for an affection of this kind can be based on habit or even on necessity—but that they love them as though they had chosen them from among many others as uniquely suiting their personalities. Their less adapted and unhappier friends and fellow-workers who think of their jobs in industry as makeshifts, seeing and mixing with such people, or even just knowing that they exist, take heart again and are no longer ashamed; they begin even to be proud of their occupation, as though its hidden meaning and unknown qualities had been revealed to them.

One wonders whether there are many peasants with a genuine love of nature and the countryside. At all events there are those who are very close to their land and whose lives conform so naturally to peasant customs and traditions that they seem unable to take root anywhere else. They are like old tree stumps resisting the axe-strokes of modern innovation and all that is alien to peasant culture. It is not heredity that brings this about, but the fact that in this way of life as in all others, certain men are born predisposed to the tough, slow rhythm of existence and the isolation of the countryside. In the same way there are meticulous, methodical and modest characters who make perfect clerks, who are held up as models and who, in the course of a life-time devotion to their work help to create by force of example many more like themselves. Thus the spirit of each class and professional category burns most fiercely in the few who instinctively understand and draw most inspiration from it.

As we have said, moreover, although such people fill this role and to some extent act as the conscience of their class, yet as well as giving they also receive something from it, just as an orator relies on the presence and living contact of his audience to feel and understand better than they themselves their thoughts and aspiration. Those who incarnate the spirit of a class in this way must have lived in it, and found themselves in a suitable position in the correct milieu to develop and give definite form to tendencies which of themselves would not otherwise have taken shape or effect. In this way, and by a collective operation, a sort of pressure exerted on itself, a class discovers and brings to the forefront its best spokesmen and

truest agents, those who are naturally at one with its aspirations. At the same time it stimulates and forces such people to surpass themselves.

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But there are other groupings than classes. Our examination of the determinants of behaviour would not be complete without a certain insistence on the emotion of nationalism—label it as we may: patriotism, love of country, devotion to the fatherland. The perspectives of history at once make it clear that national groupings have for long constituted the primary framework of social action.

Naturally classes are not entirely contained within this framework; they are wider than nations. To-day we can think of every class as extending throughout western civilization, including America. When the *émigrés* of the *ancien régime* left France for foreign countries such as Germany, Austria and even Russia, they could travel through many lands without feeling exiled from their class. And nowadays, when workers emigrate to America, they find there that working-class occupations, districts and status are much the same as in their native countries. As Marx said as early as 1848: "Workers of the world, unite".<sup>1</sup> In his *Republic* Plato suggested dividing society into three classes: philosophers and scientists, warriors, and working-people, and doubtless he had Greece in mind; nevertheless, when philosophers expound his theory, they tend to think he was speaking of the whole of humanity. So it is tempting to say that classes form extremely broad categories containing the more restricted national groups.

And yet nations are no more sub-divisions of classes than were the cities of the ancient world. They do not appear as such in history; they were not made up of pre-existing classes as though, for example, part of the highest class and part of the lowest were joined to constitute a city. On the contrary, the cities grew up independently and class distinctions began within them. So we must proceed carefully and with some reservations in mind in comparing the classes of different nations.

There are in particular the differences that result from the

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

various class groupings called nations reaching different stages in the course of the evolution which transformed agrarian into industrial societies during the nineteenth century. Comparing Germany, France and England at the turn of the eighteenth century, we find that in England there was early an advanced industrial working class; France, too, was moving towards large-scale industry, but slightly behind England; the differences between English and French industrial workers were national. In Germany the guild system still existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century and there were clear traces of the feudal system among rural workers. All these factors affected the nature of the classes, and there was no continuity between them from one country to the next. As for the rest of the continent, some of the eastern countries seem to us to belong in social structure to the Middle Ages: their economy wholly agrarian, their small towns inhabited by artisans. If then there is a tendency for countries to grow more alike, leading to an increasing similarity between the conditions of the different classes, we can see from this that it was then but beginning, and making undeniably slow progress.

But in spite of divisions between countries, it can be maintained that there was some common ground between them. This, however, tended to concern only the higher social grades. Under the *ancien régime*, for example, the nobility was a cosmopolitan class: marriages between people of different nationality were common. Being the most cultivated circles they tended to resemble one another, culture everywhere attaining the same level. And until the end of the *ancien régime* the nobility of all nations spoke French from their childhood.

Going down the social ladder, the bourgeoisie, tradesmen and business men also have some access to foreign countries. But the peasants and working classes, the common people, are entirely lacking in an understanding of the habits, customs and thought processes of other countries. There are reasons for this: their living and working conditions, ones that incline them more than other categories to follow the purely local customs and traditions of their town or province, added to the difficulty they experience in learning foreign languages and entertaining certain ideas, make them less accessible in this



respect. A narrow nationalism is moreover a characteristic of the lower rather than the upper classes, who have always to some extent affected and championed a cosmopolitan outlook.

And so far the cohesive force keeping men of different social levels together in one nation has been stronger than any attraction that could unite all the members of one class across various countries. It is not that the identity of their situations does not provide a reason for establishing connexions between even the most distant groups. But national divergencies, especially since the war, are growing more accentuated. The I.L.O. gathers together representatives not only of workers but of employers and governments too: it is an organization for collaboration amongst the nations. Agreements, federations and international congresses have not hitherto succeeded in organizing effective permanent co-operation between either the working or the non-working classes of different nations. Economic agreements seem to pre-suppose a previous drawing together of the countries involved, not the other way round. Customs barriers arise along political frontiers. The division of labour could only be organized on an international scale if the League of Nations were in itself a reality.<sup>1</sup>

There is in any case this difference between class attitudes and national feeling: every class is situated within a hierarchy, at a certain level on the social scale, whereas every nation thinks of itself as being on the same level—that is, foremost; it judges itself to be the best. Some consider themselves to be the chosen people, some the centre of civilization, others again think they are ethnically superior. It is an inoffensive enough pretension in itself, if not in its consequences, since it is common to all countries. Thus the negro theatres of New York show a heaven peopled only by black people, a hell full of white. It pleases the negroes and does not worry the whites, who do not visit these theatres.

In general every nation thinks itself superior to its fellows because, in fixing an order of merit, it concentrates on some

<sup>1</sup> "If a nation is to enter into free economic relations with another it must have abandoned an exclusive patriotism for another, wider spirit." E. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, Paris, 1902, 2nd ed., pp. 259ff. See our study, *La doctrine d'Emile Durkheim* (*Revue philosophique*, May-June 1918, p. 371).



characteristic less markedly present among the others. For example, a nation with a sense of order and discipline will hold itself superior to every other nation in the world for this reason: the supreme virtue being obedience, the nation that does not even need to be trained to obey but has obedience in its blood seems the salt of the earth. But another country, richer in individual courage and sensitive pride, with a nobler idea of liberty, will place itself first, taking these virtues as claims that none can equal. Again, modern Greeks claim that they are on a par with ancient Greeks. Citizens of the United States are proud of belonging to a nation with its eyes fixed firmly on the future. Since however this sense of superiority is common to all countries a hierarchy cannot arise, whereas an inferior social class is acknowledged as such not only by the higher classes but by its members.

So there is simply no answer to the question, what is a nation? Auguste Comte said that the concept of the nation was essentially metaphysical, that is empty. And indeed, at the time of the French revolution the idea of the nation stood in opposition to the multiplicity of the provinces: it was a symbol of a single and indivisible France replacing the feudal diversity of the *ancien régime*. But the movement towards unity also draws a certain positive element from the strength given by traditional trends, class aspirations and interests, and finally, the various political ideas of the State.

Clearly, from this point of view, national sentiment is not only made out of differing elements according to country, but also appears in different and even opposing forms within the same country. The phrase "the true France" is often heard in France: it may mean either the France of St. Louis, Joan of Arc, the monarchy, and the eldest daughter of the Church; or else the France of the revolution and the rights of man which, as Anatole France said, has not ceased to instruct Europe in justice.

In other countries one particular class stands for the whole nation and national feeling finds expression primarily as a form of class feeling: in England it is the aristocrat or capitalist; the ideal of the "gentleman" is that even of the manual workers. In Russia it is the worker, the proletariat. In France, rather are the middle classes representative.

Elsewhere again the concept of the totalitarian state is dominant: in Nazi Germany it is based on racial unity; in Fascist Italy, on a new political formula. One of the best-known fascist theorists defined the régime as the ideal unity of producers with political power. As he saw it, Bolshevism achieved unity only in the sphere of production; National Socialism allows economics and politics to survive as two distinct domains (a desperate attempt to make a last stand to save capitalism); only in Italy have the state, capital and labour been amalgamated.<sup>1</sup> Such strong ideas about social life conceal the age-old feelings of a natural hostility to all that is foreign in its most extreme form.

In the new world of to-day patriotism, in its various forms and differing in intensity according to circumstances and times, is well defined by Durkheim as a mechanical solidarity based on the resemblance between men living in proximity one with another. It is strengthened by linguistic unity, by common traditions, by the action of economic and political interests. It has little connexion with the size of a nation, its numbers or even its demographic vitality as expressed by the excess of births over deaths.

Of course such a sentiment is not all-powerful. The extent of migration from Europe to America and even within Europe both before and since the war, is proof that economic difficulties are sometimes stronger than attachment to the native land. For there is always a large number of people without deep roots ready to go anywhere in our civilization where a living can be made. Nevertheless there must be some definite current in motion to take men away from the country where they grew up. Migrations are collective displacements comparable to the wanderings of whole peoples in the ancient world. The emigrant is first attracted, then finds himself incorporated in the crowd of other emigrants. And when he arrives in the new country, for a while he instinctively seeks out the company of his countrymen. It is only in the long run, after a generation or two, that assimilation takes place. At all events the settling of the United States, however rapid it may

<sup>1</sup> Ugo Spirito, in the conclusion to *Nuove esperienze economiche* (a joint work of authors of various nationalities), Italian edition, Florence, 1935.

seem, has not been such as to make the population anything like as dense in America as in Europe, even after 150 years. And within Europe too, there are very big differences in density from one country to another. Such is national tenacity, and to a great extent it succeeds in keeping the citizen at home.

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Apart from the determinants peculiar to certain classes and nations, there are others more general both in their object and in being common to the whole population, and yet in another sense more specialized, since they are developed and cultivated intensely and continuously within limited circles.

If a sociologist had undertaken this study in the thirteenth or even the sixteenth or seventeenth century, he would doubtless have given pride of place to religion and religious determinants. We should have had a diptych in the manner of Carlyle's *Past and Present*. But we must confine ourselves to the social world in which we are living to-day. Maps can be, and indeed are made indicating the areas of Europe that correspond to different religious denominations, and they are probably much the same as they were just after the Reformation. But a comparison of this sort is an outward thing only, and it is not enough simply to look at men's labels, Catholic or Protestant, to be able to draw conclusions as to their practice, and, above all, their faith.

In a recent enquiry which we have already had occasion to mention<sup>1</sup> the author has taken into consideration only the masses and their practice. He adheres strictly to the question of their participation in religious life: the sacraments, services and devotional works. "Why," he asks, "do we pay so little attention to the living religions? Obedience to their dictates absorbs and moulds millions of human beings around us, thousands of groups: for the practice of a religion is a social rather than an individual matter." And he adds: "To practise religion is not only to link oneself to divine powers. It involves adherence to a domestic and personal morality, whose duties are inculcated through the catechism, the confessional

<sup>1</sup> Le Bras, *Les transformations religieuses des campagnes françaises depuis la fin du XVIIe siècle* (*Annales sociologiques*, Series E, Section 2, 1937).

and the sermon. Thus it is likely that religious practice will affect the family. It tends to debar free love and divorce, birth control and abortions; to increase marriages and births, and, to a smaller extent, voluntary celibacy, as well as to encourage separations rather than divorces. Several of these points have already come under investigation. It is more difficult, though an attempt has been made, to estimate the action of religious practice on social morality, as a brake on criminality or a spur to the accomplishment of civil duties."

But religious practice also affects the cohesion of the group and the hierarchy of groups. Proudhon demonstrated "how the organization of the Sunday mass, and in general the organization of Catholic ceremonies, with their distances, their precedences (places for worship, different classes of services), strengthens the feeling of hierarchy, and how too temporary incorporation in a big assembly imposes a concern for appearance and cleanliness on the peasant which he is far from feeling on working days. Religious practice imposes not only a certain bearing and attitude on the people, but even to some extent influences costume and habitat. It disciplines the masses through continuous pressures of which they are scarcely aware."

We shall not attempt to trace the vicissitudes of religious practice from the eighteenth century to the present. But if we look at a map of the 40,000 towns in France where the number of Easter communicants is indicated for the period 1930-35, what strikes us is "the division of the country into great areas of faith and unbelief. In the eighteenth century religious practice has almost universally the same qualities and failings. To-day, France as a religious country is a federation of disparate regions. There are three main church-going areas: the north-west, the east and the *Massif Central*, and a few smaller districts: the Basque country, the *Terres froides* in Dauphiné and Queyras, where most if not all communicate at Easter. Between these regions are non-practising deserts, where the proportion of church-goers rarely reaches a tenth of the adult population. Each regional group includes several *départements* and several million inhabitants and their boundaries are as clear as those of States."

The reasons for this condition are many, differently combined



and not all equally strong. "The pious regions of the west are on the whole peopled by a docile and sometimes idealistic folk who were much affected by the missions of the seventeenth century, the trials of the revolution and resistance to secularization. No new spirit has ever affected them violently, their relations with central France and even neighbouring towns having been intermittent and never far-reaching. Within the region there is a whole social structure for the preservation of established usage. There are many priests, and feudal traits have survived in spite of the revolution: every parish has its priest, often protected by the lord of the manor. Independent schools, upheld by the big landowners and by the people, who are fervent in faith and willing taxpayers, inculcate traditional principles into most of the girls and many of the boys. A carefully supervised press, partially prepared by the parish priest, ensures the propaganda for orthodoxy."

There is a very different state of affairs in the dechristianized areas, which have almost always "either a slack or disturbed religious tradition. . . . All the central regions of France have been subject to the influence of Paris, Limoges and Toulouse, with a consequent unsettling of their habits and thought. The clergy are few, so are the nobility and church-going bourgeoisie; each priest is in charge of several parishes, and no lord of the manor makes it his business to uphold the faith. Almost all the children are educated in the state schools, and there are few Catholic organizations, whereas lay societies flourish. . . . In the past, the feasts of the church provided occasion for meetings and amusements. The growth of new pleasures, transport and the influence of Parisian fashions are all detrimental to what the church calls Christian modesty, that is submission to established custom."<sup>1</sup>

It is scarcely surprising that religious determinants should

<sup>1</sup> In an interesting book, *Middletown*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merral Lynd, New York, 1929, the results of an enquiry of this kind on the extent of church-going in the United States twenty-five years ago and to-day are given. The enquiry was carried out in only a few medium-sized towns and was no more than a sample. Figures for the past depended on the vague memories of elderly priests.—(For recent data on France, see: C. Bettelheim and S. Frère, *Auxerre en 1950*, A. Colin, 1950, Part 4, Chap. II, and Yvan Daniel, *Aspects de la pratique religieuse à Paris*, ed. Ouvrierès, 1952.—Editor.)



maintain their full strength within close-knit groups of believers. The great danger to habitual piety lies in contact with the indifferent or unbelievers. In the past religion was part and parcel of man's whole life and thought: such was the price of its supremacy. We have witnessed the birth of modern civilization dominated by material interests. Lay institutions take hold first of the child and then of the man, plunging him into an atmosphere totally unlike that of religion. Every individual is simultaneously a member of several groups, each with its own ends to which any thought of an after-life is irrelevant; and in passing constantly from the denominational group (if he is still attached to one) to others scarcely aware of its existence, he comes to think of the church as an institution on a par with any other, and to which he devotes less and less attention. The State is foremost in hostility to the church once it has cast off the yoke of religion and considers itself to be an end in itself. Its aim is to make man its creature entirely, to absorb him and monopolize him. Like the church, it demands undivided allegiance. The totalitarian state is the church's worst enemy; but wherever the state tightens control over its members, religion suffers.

Its only way of defending itself and of maintaining its proselytizing power is by strengthening its élite. Amongst the faithful there is in fact "a fervent minority, distinguished in the public sphere by the making of fervent communions, by daily or frequent attendance at mass, vespers, services in honour of the Host and other ceremonies, participation in processions and pilgrimages; and, within the family by communal prayers, fasting and abstinence. The clergy, monastic groups, confraternities and pious associations of all kinds are recruited from amongst this élite." But the existence and survival of such intensely religious circles is connected, as we have seen, with a whole set of social conditions, customs, systems of property, urban or rural culture, etc. Also involved is the nature of the particular population, affected by traditional influences and reinforced in its ethical characteristics by heredity.

Religious circles are conditioned by their social environment. But religious temperaments develop fully and to their own satisfaction only within a pious and devoutly faithful environment.

It is within these intact areas that the church seeks out and encourages vocations: "converts" too, who feel themselves called from amongst the unbelievers, find with such people and images and symbols their most congenial milieu, and feel they can best influence the outside world from within its frontiers.

Bergson drew a sharp distinction between the two sources of religion: closed religion, static and traditional; and the open religion of the spirit rather than the letter, the charitable and mystic movement of the soul. But the mystics cannot do without the church: they are in fact its growing point, its *avant-garde*, so imbued with its spirit that in them it overflows traditional forms. It is only when they have absorbed the tradition more thoroughly than their fellows that they transcend or abandon it entirely. Most mystics have been monks or friars, and in every case they have been trained by priests or monks. Moreover the church can and has often been initially suspicious of visionaries maintaining that they see beyond traditional religious thought. An extensive and ancient body which has tested the value and strength of its beliefs mistrusts the innovations of individuals or small groups within it. But it does not fail to recognize that the faithful in whom religious feeling is exalted and deepened play a necessary part, and that without them not only would dogma and rite wear thin in time, gradually losing all sharp definition, but all piety would be reduced to a fixed and outward conformity.<sup>1</sup> Thus, far from being separate and opposed to each other, these two elements of religion are inseparable: they could be compared to those watercourses and canals that flow between straight and unyielding banks and the living spring from which a new current gushes without cease. The small group of the devout maintains faith in the world, but it would be incapable of the entire management of the religious system, consisting as it does of institutions and traditions on which its form depends. The key concepts, rules for living and directions and programmes are formulated for the mass of believers by the clergy and its

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, op. cit., p. 286 (dogmatics and mystics).

immediate entourage; they offer faith to the lukewarm and even to those who are already almost emancipated.

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Similar observations could be made about other determinants of thought and action which have no great general influence or pretensions to affecting the masses, but which are highly important to a small, perhaps scattered group united by a common interest. One example of this is theoretical and practical science in all its branches and applications. There is nothing miraculous in the fact that scientists, and very great ones, have in certain outstanding epochs and areas been clustered together, and are not merely encountered in isolation. Such men have almost always been surrounded and supported by groups with like scientific interests. Indeed, a case has been made out that almost every one of the great philosophers and physicists of ancient Greece was the leader of a school and spoke for a group of philosophers, who could be called his disciples but who include his forerunners and fellow-thinkers.

Of course, science derives its vitality from the scientists, from their individual minds. In the seventeenth century, before there were scientific journals, this vitality was confined to a small circle whose members were scattered over the whole of Europe, communicating their discoveries to each other in private correspondence or on visits, and so contriving to keep up with the progress made in each different department of knowledge. As the number of people engaged in this type of work grows and their contacts become more frequent, and above all when the practical inventions for which they are directly or indirectly responsible attract public attention, science reaches many unscientific circles. This interest has various incentives: the natural curiosity of those who wish to understand what seems to them marvellous; the vanity and snobbery of *femmes-savantes* and men who would like to be taken for true scientists; philosophical convictions and the advent of "the enlightenment" among the philosophers of the eighteenth century; and later, among the French positivists, a belief that human progress is possible only if thought is revolutionized by general participation in the scientific movement and scientific culture.

But the scientists, who appear as the source of all these currents in public thought and of the general opinion in which science is held, are not usually entirely self-made. They come from colleges, they have worked in laboratories and libraries, lived in scientific circles, taken advantage of a whole collection of institutions whose object is to form and maintain what can be called "scientific society", distinct from all others, self-sufficient, with its own language, conventions and traditions. And this society too, covering as it does many forms and kinds of science, is in contact with a wider society, or rather with the whole range of different societies: the extension and development of science depend on general social conditions. Scientists are not always aware of this: isolated within their particular domain they think they can cut themselves off from the rest of the world, even from specialists in other branches. Thus there are two types of scientific determinant: first, one particular science as an exclusive object ; but then also each science as an integral part of a whole, and even science in general as a means to human progress. Sometimes the non-scientific masses have a clearer awareness than the scientists themselves of the unity of science and its social import.

Art and æsthetic enjoyment and production appear to be the privilege of an élite. In this sphere individual temperament and innate gifts as opposed to social training apparently claim their due and come once more to the forefront. Art is unimaginable without the individual artists whose creative acts produce beautiful works which gradually and as it were from without shape the artistic sensibilities of other men. Surely they are the initiators and inventors who teach us to fix our attention on certain aspects of the outside world, combinations of sound, shape and colour, and to feel their æsthetic value as we should not have done without their guidance. But in fact there is also a society of musicians, another of painters, another of sculptors. There is no talent or genius, however personal, that does not have to undergo the technical and æsthetic discipline of those circles of men drawn together by their natural affinities but in which intuitions and experiences are pooled. Further, these societies, which are in a sense organs of artistic sensibility for society at large, can grow and exercise



their proper function only as long as they remain in close and uninterrupted contact with it. Here again, many artists are deluded in thinking they can cultivate art for art's sake and permanently isolate themselves in a private world.

Auguste Comte well understood that the apparent exception to the law of progress provided by the arts is explained by the fact that there have been long periods of stability when, manners and way of life being fixed, artists could be in harmony with society and nourish their art on the aspirations and living examples surrounding them; and other lengthy periods when customs and thought were constantly evolving and changing and the artist lagged behind society.<sup>1</sup> Tasso wrote the *Jerusalem Delivered* when the crusades were no more than a memory, and Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a caricature of courtly manners long outworn.

In a modern society that had found its bearings and realized its own nature there would be vast opportunities open to every kind of art. Hitherto individualism has been the rule, and it is by fits and starts only that artistic currents can affect artists or the public collectively.

We shall return again to politics only to underline the importance of this determinant for the thought and sensibility of men and groups rather than for their actions. It is hard to say whether politics are cause or effect. They certainly appear to be causes when one considers the part they play in the daily preoccupations of the average man. In Jules Romain's play *Le Docteur Knock*, a country doctor, having successfully persuaded most of his patients that they are ill and ought to take care of themselves, says to a colleague, as he shows him the village, the houses and the farms from his window: "Medicine is intensely alive here nowadays." In the same way, members of Parliament, the party bosses and journalists could say in any modern country: "Politics are intensely alive here nowadays." In appearance, at least, it is of course their doing. For politics flourish chiefly in the circles that take an active interest in them, inventing the slogans, arranging the programmes, carrying our propaganda and taking decisions. Such roles are adopted by people who like them and possess the necessary gifts.

<sup>1</sup> *Cours de philosophie positive*, Vol. V, pp. 328ff.; Vol. VI, pp. 163ff.



Nevertheless, if the point will bear stressing once again, men following such professions and feeling such vocations can find room only in a society wherein their activity answers widespread and deeply felt collective tendencies of the whole mass of the people; a society creating for its needs the necessary political organs. Order and progress: these are the two leitmotifs of political life. Now most men, according to temperament, and also to their social situation, their religious habits, the form of their patriotism and their local and family traditions, would place themselves somewhere in one camp or the other. Each individual naturally takes effective action in the political life of the nation, *département* or town by voting only rarely. None the less, it is they who represent continuous public opinion, and it is under the pressure of public opinion that political circles, in the narrow sense, think and react. They modify and direct that opinion, but in a sense only by being just one jump ahead of it, by expressing it and helping it to a greater self-awareness.

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Have we now considered all the determinants of individual behaviour in social life? Moralists may reproach us for not having given central place to the sense of duty. And indeed we have not spoken of duty pure and simple, of the categorical imperative, the moral law, because it concerns man's interior life. As for social morality and social duties, their content is determined by the different social groups to which we belong: there is class morality, professional morality, civic morality, religious morality and the scientist's and artist's morality too; the object of this whole study has not been to construct a theory but to examine what men believe, that is what they do.

True, we have discussed neither justice nor charity; so we might recall Spencer's definition of these two virtues and the distinction he drew between them. Justice consists in obeying established laws, and is founded on the idea that these laws are the condition of order, that is of the maintenance of society at the stage it has reached. It is negative, since for the most part it counsels us to abstain from doing things; it is collective, because it applies equally to all members of the group under its sway. Charity consists of everything done to better social

conditions, or rather to do away with the evil produced by strict justice wherever in particular cases it fails to eliminate social inequalities and extreme hardship. It is positive since it demands initiative, effort, a sort of offering up of ourselves; it is individual, since every single person can practise it in his milieu and as far as his influence is felt.

These are two types of behaviour, and two types of men represent them who complement as well as being opposed to each other. But somewhere between them a wider justice can be imagined, what we might call social justice, going beyond strictly legal justice and differing from charity in that it is collective. It could be called solidarity, as it is found within certain social groups: a morality of collaboration and mutual help, taking shape within the framework of modern social life. There is in such an idea a whole programme, one which is inspiring more and more members of our societies.

But to conclude a study which has been concerned for the most part with the economic aspect of social life we should insist rather on another distinction, concerned with more immediate issues: that which can be drawn between the morality of producers and that of consumers.<sup>1</sup>

Every individual is of course both. But economic evolution as it has taken place for more than a century under the capitalist system seems to have been tending principally towards an increase, indeed an unlimited increase in production. Things are produced not for consumption but for the sake of producing, and consumers are expected to ensure markets for production at its own price because the development of production depends on this. Of course this is the condition of a certain economic progress, but it brings with it the paradoxical result that, with ever more products, there are still whole sections of the populace who lack commodities—even necessities—that modern techniques should ensure for them. It should be possible to reconcile economic progress with a more equitable distribution of total wealth, and thus allow the living standards of the lower classes to rise. Such is the principle behind the morality of the consumer, subordinating all mankind's activities to the

<sup>1</sup> Horace M. Kallen, *The Decline and Rise of the Consumer, a Philosophy of Consumer Co-operation*, New York, 1936.

satisfaction of the needs of the greatest number. The whole problem of the economic system lies here.

Stendhal's chief interest in life lay in observing how men go about "the pursuit of happiness". And there indeed lies—or should lie—the essential determinant of human conduct. Individuals succeed more or less as chance or their temperament, their skill or experience allows. They pursue happiness singly, in broken ranks. But let us consider not individuals but groups. Urban civilization has led, as we have seen, to a sharp division into two areas; productive activity and consumption. But while there has been a drawing together and combination of all forms of work in accordance with rules that answer to nothing but production or professional necessities; and while every social group bends its efforts to this end, we may well ask whether they have succeeded in organizing the other half of life so efficiently—that part which is devoted to satisfying needs, in short, the most important part? For we must take the word consumption to imply not only destruction but also achievement. It is for man a matter of realizing himself to the full within the framework and opportunities of collective life; and while it holds out very rich possibilities in this respect, as yet they have been neither exploited nor even explored.

Men are well aware of this; hence the passionate interest now taken in every form of association and every institution inspired by community feeling. They have understood that collective effort is necessary to organize the pursuit of happiness socially in something so complex as modern civilization. Happiness, in fact, is not in these circumstances the automatic result of increasing wealth and productivity. Perhaps even, as Bergson suggested, austerity, restrictions and even a certain asceticism is a necessary element in material satisfaction. In short, this is a determinant as yet unclear, but beginning to take shape. Certainly, if it is to grow and increase in strength, more and more attention must be paid to our experience of life as a social phenomenon, and a science of man must at last be established. Here again it is up to society to find within itself those who are best fitted to carry out such investigations; and at the same time it must create an environment favourable to the progress of these studies.

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# Index

- AFRICA, 21, 77  
 Argentine, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Aristotle, 44  
 Asia, 21, 77  
 Astor, J. J., 49  
 Australia, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Austria, 122  
 Aykrood, W. R. 92 *n.*
- BALZAC, Honoré de, 61  
 Baruzi, J., x  
 Belgium, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Bergson, H., ix, 2, 131, 137  
 Bettelheim, C., 129 *n.*  
 Blache, Vidal de la, 30, 34  
 Bloch, Marc, xvi, 39  
 Blondel, Charles, 3  
 Bücher, K., 51 *n.*  
 Bulgaria, 23 *n.*  
 Burnet, E., 92 *n.*
- CANADA, 23 *n.*, 38  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 127  
 Cervantes, 134  
 Cicero, 9, 10  
 Colin, Armand, 23 *n.*, 129 *n.*  
 Comte, Auguste, 3 *n.*, 65, 125, 134  
 Co-operatives, 36-40, 87-90, 105  
 Coutin, Pierre, 66 *n.*  
 Couturat, L., x  
 Croiset, A., 59  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 57  
 Czechoslovakia, 23 *n.*, 37, 67 *n.*
- DANIEL, Yvan, 129 *n.*  
 Davy, Georges, 14 *n.*, 19 *n.*  
 Denmark, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Detoeuf, M. A., 65 *n.*  
 Durkheim, E., x, xi, xiii, xv, 8 *n.*, 14 *n.*,  
 124 *n.*, 126
- ENGELS, Friedrich, 122 *n.*
- FAUQUET, G., 89 *n.*  
 Florence, 53, 55  
 Ford, Henry, 62  
 Fourier, C., 9  
 France, Anatole, 125  
 Franklin, Benjamin, 45
- Frère, S., 129 *n.*  
 Friedmann, Georges, Foreword, 23 *n.*,  
 73 *n.*
- GERMANY, 23 *n.*, 37, 51-53, 55, 56,  
 67 *n.*, 80, 81, 88, 90, 91, 97, 104, 111,  
 116, 122, 123, 126  
 Gompertz, Samuel, 83  
 Granet, Marcel, 17 *n.*  
 Great Britain, 23 *n.*, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57,  
 67 *n.*, 74, 80, 81, 82, 87, 88  
 Greaves, J. C., 77 *n.*  
 Greece, 7, 21, 67 *n.*, 125, 132  
 Groethuysen, B., 59 *n.*
- HESIOD, I  
 Holland, 23 *n.*, 51, 53, 57, 67 *n.*  
 Hungary, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*
- INTERNATIONAL Labour Office, xii,  
 74, 88 *n.*, 91, 103, 124  
 Ireland, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*, 88 *n.*  
 Italy, 23 *n.*, 51, 55, 67 *n.*, 80, 126
- KALLEN, Horace M., 136 *n.*  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 3
- LA Bruyère, Jean de, 30  
 Lambrechts, Hector, 105 *n.*  
 Lavis, Ernest, 30 *n.*  
 Le Bras, Gabriel, 4, 127 *n.*  
 Leibnitz, G. W., ix  
 Le Play, F., xi, 13 *n.*  
 Leroy, Maxime, 25 *n.*, 105 *n.*, 108 *n.*  
 Lévy-Bruhl, L., x  
 Louis-Philippe, 52, 61  
 Luther, Martin, 55  
 Lynd, Robert S., and Helen Merral,  
 129
- MACDOUGALL, W. 19 *n.*  
 Machiavelli, 57  
 Mantoux, P. 69 *n.*  
 Marcel, Etienne, 10  
 Marjolin, Robert, 82 *n.*  
 Martin, St., 12  
 Marx, Karl, 102, 122  
 Maunier, R., 25  
 Mercier, Ernest, 73 *n.*  
 Michelet, Jules, 2

- NIEBOER, J. H., 77 *n.*  
 Nietzsche, F. W., 59  
 Norway, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
  
 PIRENNE, H., xvi, 41, 42 *n.*  
 Plato, 8, 118 *n.*, 122  
 Poland, 23 *n.*  
 Portugal, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Proudhon, Pierre Joseph, 25, 128  
  
 RENARD, Jules, 6, 30  
 Retz, Cardinal de, 10  
 Romain, Jules, 134  
 Rome, 9, 21  
 Russell, Bertrand, x  
  
 SAINT-SIMON, Comte H., 61 *n.*, 65  
 Schumpeter, J., 46  
 Serbia, 23 *n.*  
 Siegfried, André, 7  
 Simiand, F., x, 23 *n.*, 26 *n.*, 28, 31, 36 *n.*,  
     60 *n.*, 61 *n.*, 63, 64 *n.*, 67 *n.*, 68, 71,  
     80 *n.*, 81 *n.*, 82 *n.*, 83 *n.*, 85 *n.*, 86 *n.*,  
     87, 95, 101 *n.*, 102 *n.*, 103, 105 *n.*,  
     106 *n.*, 110 *n.*, 116  
 Sion, Jules, 39 *n.*  
 Smith, Adam, 42, 51 *n.*  
 Spain, 23 *n.*, 51  
 Sombart, W., 42, 43, 55, 62  
  
 Sorel, Georges, 80 *n.*  
 Spencer, Herbert, 135  
 Spirito, Ugo, 126 *n.*  
 Sweden, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*  
 Switzerland, 23 *n.*  
  
 TARDE, Gabriel, 19  
 Tasso, 134  
 Tawney, R. H., 57  
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, 117  
 Trade Unions, 79-90, 105  
 Truchy, H., 29  
  
 U.S.A., 21, 23 *n.*, 26, 27, 31, 49,  
     50-53, 58, 67 *n.*, 81, 82, 91, 94, 98,  
     100, 122, 124, 126, 127, 129 *n.*  
 U.S.S.R., 21, 23 *n.*, 67 *n.*, 73, 80, 122,  
     125  
  
 VEBLEN, Thorstein, 52 *n.*  
 Voltaire, 55  
  
 WEBB, Beatrice and Sidney, 74, 79  
 Weber, Max, 46 *n.*, 48 *n.*, 53, 55, 57, 58  
 Willcox, W. F., 21 *n.*  
 Woytinsky, W. S., 103 *n.*  
  
 YOUNG, Arthur, 30







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